




3 1761 11631136 6



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
University of Toronto

<https://archive.org/details/31761116311366>

CA20N
X1
-D23



No. 108

N° 108

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

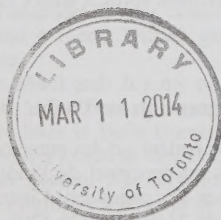
Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 3 March 2014

Lundi 3 mars 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 3 March 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 3 mars 2014

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to introduce James Crown from the Woodstock General Hospital, who is here today as part of the registered practical nurses.

I would also like to express my apologies. I was to meet with the delegation this morning, but because of some mishap on the Gardiner, I was stuck in traffic for two hours and I was unable to be here. Hopefully, we will get to meet them at a future date.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to welcome several guests from Durham region's economic development team to the Legislature this morning to celebrate Durham Day here at Queen's Park today in rooms 228 and 230, and that includes a scrumptious lunch.

I'm just introducing to you, Mr. Speaker, Kathy Weiss—if you would stand for me—and Kasia Chojecki, both from the region of Durham; Rhonda Keenan, from the city of Oshawa; and Fiaz Jadoon, from the city of Pickering.

I just want to make sure that everyone knows that all members and their staff are welcome, commencing at 11:45. Don't forget, there's a great free lunch.

I'd also like to introduce, from my staff, Cassandra Cruciano. Cassandra is my constituency and outreach assistant—and a recent Ottawa graduate—in my community office.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure today to introduce Jordan Milks from the great riding of Nepean-Carleton. He lives in Bells Corners; we call it BC. I'm happy that he has joined us here at Queen's Park today.

M. Gilles Bisson: J'ai le plaisir d'introduire Carol Dumas, qui originellement vient de Timmins mais est ici à Toronto pour aider son beau ami M. Owen, qui est page ici à l'Assemblée.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm pleased to have in the House members of the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat liaison committee, whose help and hard work are helping us to guide seniors' issues. Especially, Speaker, they were very much involved in making sure that the community grant program got under way.

We have Arlene Smetaniuk, Mary Hynes, Sarah Park, Bernard Jordaan, Edna Beange, Lilian Wells, Elizabeth Macnab, Stephanie McCleave, Elizabeth Allard, Zul

Kassamali, and from the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat, Mihaela Dumitrascu and Ronit Gordon.

Thank you for coming. I hope you have a good day here at Queen's Park.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'd like all members to help me welcome the students and families of Sir William Osler school of Bond Head, students who have come from both Simcoe-Grey and York-Simcoe to come together to show their support for Madi Vanstone here in the House today. Thank you for coming.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce Mr. Bernard Jordaan, who is the president of the United Senior Citizens of Ontario.

Et ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de présenter des gens de Sudbury. Magalie Malette était page, et elle est ici avec son père, Michael, et sa mère, Marie-Josée Bergeron. Bienvenue, monsieur Malette, madame Bergeron et votre fille, Magalie.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It is my pleasure to introduce Mary Hynes, a resident of Don Valley East, to the Legislature. Welcome.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I have a number of introductions to make this morning. First, from Lakeridge Health Corp., I'd like to welcome Mr. Kevin Empey, the CEO, and Aaron Lazarus, the senior director of communications.

I'd also like to welcome, from Covanta, Howard Titus, the facility manager, and Jeff Rayner, the client services manager.

Finally, I'd like to recognize Amanda Meek, who used to work with me here at Queen's Park. Welcome.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It is my pleasure to introduce Anish Chopra, father of page Meera Chopra, visiting the House today.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Please join me in welcoming Cameron Burgess, a Métis leader as well as a businessman from northern Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It's Social Work Week in Ontario, so it's my pleasure to rise today to welcome representatives from the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers. I'd like to recognize Glenda McDonald, registrar; Lise Betteridge, deputy registrar; and Jolanne Kearns, communications. And, of course, we very much appreciate them joining us today.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to extend a very special welcome to Cale Holmes, who is visiting us with his fellow students from Sir William Osler Public School. Cale is the grandson of my good friend Bob Callow, and I promised Bob that I would extend this very special welcome to his grandson Cale. Welcome.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very happy to welcome the grade 5 class from St. Brendan Catholic School in the Scarborough part of my riding. Welcome. They're here today with their teacher, and I hope they have a wonderful day at Queen's Park.

I'm also happy to have two of my constituency office staff here: Ghazal Mardmomen and Ryan Pyne. They're here for Durham Day. All MPPs are welcome to Durham Day, starting at 11:30 after question period today.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I ask members to take a look back behind you there in the media gallery. I think the media gallery has never looked better. We're joined today by Sheridan College journalism students.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I want all members to join me in welcoming someone with a very special birthday wish today. Our page Michael Sadono is celebrating his 13th birthday.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'd like to welcome some guests today on behalf of my colleague the MPP for Sault Ste. Marie. Indeed, we have special guests from Sault Ste. Marie. Their daughter and sister is the page captain, Ella Santana. Here to join Ella are Mary-Catherine Glibota and John Santana, her parents—there they are—and her sister Kate Santana. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Oakville, who is stuck in that highway situation, for page Shannon McCracken: mother Cheri Riddell, and father Kevin McCracken, are here in the gallery to visit. Welcome.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Premier, in a letter dated August 15, your health minister told 12-year-old Madi Vanstone that the province will not fund the medication Kalydeco solely due to its high cost. In other words, you and your government callously sent this young lady home to suffer with cystic fibrosis.

Premier, disregard for the well-being of Madi is simply wrong. Your government is willing to squander billions when it comes to gas plant cancellations, Ornge and eHealth—but no money for a sick child.

For seven months, Madi's classmates, teachers, family and friends, many of whom are here today, have helped Madi pay for this medication out of pocket. Thanks to these people, she is now symptom-free. This afternoon, I'll be presenting petitions that they have collected on Madi's behalf.

Premier, is this the Ontario we can expect from your Liberal government, where 12-year-old children have to fundraise to keep their friend alive?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I was very pleased to meet with Madi and her mom, Beth, this morning. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and I had an opportunity to sit down with her in my office. I just want to commend her for her courage and for her very articulate expression of her situation.

The decision on funding drugs, Mr. Speaker, as you will know, is one that has a process. The pan-Canadian alliance is negotiating, but we have been, obviously, pushing behind the scenes. We want to fund Kalydeco. There is no question that the government wants to fund Kalydeco. But we are part of a Canadian process so that children like Madi and people like Madi across the country will have access to this drug.

I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Whitby—Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Premier, you know the facts. You know that Kalydeco is the only medication available that treats the underlying causes of Madi's cystic fibrosis. It allows her to breathe, to play with her friends, to go to school—in short, to have a life. Yet you continue to deny Madi funding for Kalydeco, solely on the basis of costs, and keep hiding behind this pan-Canadian alliance.

Minister, how much is too much to save a child's life? Will you commit today to funding Kalydeco for Madi?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Of course we don't put a price on a human being's life, Mr. Speaker.

As the member opposite knows, and as Madi and her mom, Beth, and the minister and I talked about this morning, the negotiations are being led by Alberta. Alberta has made three proposals to the manufacturer, and they have rejected each one. We need Vertex, which is the company, to step up and be a partner in these negotiations, because we need this drug to be available to children and people across the country. It is not responsible for Ontario to undermine other provinces.

We are going to do everything in our power to expedite this process. That's the conversation we had with Madi and her mom this morning. We are going to push very hard and make it very clear that it is inappropriate that Vertex would not engage in this process in a very responsible way. We are going to push on that, Mr. Speaker, and work to expedite this as quickly as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary. The member from York—Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is also to the Premier. Premier, Madi's classmates are also from my riding, and I agree with my colleagues. Your single, cold concern seems to be the cost to the system. In fact, you said it in a letter: The drug is too expensive.

What I want to ask you is, have you ever thought of the cost to the system if you don't fund this life-changing medication? Days and days, stretching into months, in

ICU; a lung transplant at some later date, when a donor becomes available; and the recovery that goes with that—thousands and thousands of dollars will be spent. Madi needs this medication now.

Premier, there are very few people who have the power to make a life-saving change for someone else. This is a lifesaver for Madi and a defining moment for you. Are you ready to commit to funding—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Before we start, I've been hearing some very, very quiet people during the question, and I hope to hear the answer as well in the same respect.

Premier?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex will now come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I and the Minister of Health made it extremely clear to Madi and her mom this morning that we want to fund this drug, that we want this drug to be available to her and to all of the children across this country. And so we are going to push. We are going to push the company. We're going to make it very clear that this process needs to be expedited.

What we know is that the way that the research was funded for this drug was through charitable dollars, and so we believe it is inappropriate for the process to have to drag on. We are going to push to expedite the process. That is what we said to Madi, and we will keep her and her family in the loop. I think it is commendable that the community is taking such an interest in this, and we are going to do everything in our power to make it move more quickly.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Premier. Minister, last week, disturbing and disgusting comments made by the Minister of Culture were brought to light. Just prior to the Thornhill by-elections, the minister made comments trying to pit Ontario's Jewish community against Ontario's Chinese community for political gain.

Trying to pit communities against one another: Premier, is this the kind of behaviour that you have led your ministers to believe is acceptable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There is not a member in this House who is more committed to inclusion and pluralism and multiculturalism than the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. There just is not one.

My understanding is that the minister offered an apology last week to the members of the Jewish community if there was offence taken. The minister is an unwavering supporter of multiculturalism in this province. What he

believes and what we believe is that every community should be treated equally, that everyone in this society should be treated with respect and with fairness. That is what he believes. That is what guides his behaviour. It's what has guided his public and his private life.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Those comments were out there for three weeks. I believe that the Minister of Culture stood behind those comments and the only reason that he apologized is because he got caught.

In his comments, the minister played some of the worst stereotypes applied to the Jewish community. He did all of this while trying to persuade members of Ontario's Chinese-Canadian community to send a message along ethnic, political lines.

This old, Chicago-style ethnic politics doesn't have a place in Ontario. If you don't fire the minister, you're condoning his behaviour. Will you show some character, make the minister answer for his actions, and then demand his resignation, Premier?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm sorry, but coming from a member of a party that intentionally works to divide people—I really believe that the divisions that the party opposite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. When I stand, you're all out of order when you keep talking.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My understanding is that the minister commended Stephen Harper for supporting one of Ontario's strong cultural communities and simply suggested that that support be broadened to support all communities. That is our position, and we are not a party that wants to divide people. We do not want to divide rural and urban. We do not want to divide labour from employers. We do not want to divide northern from—

Interjections.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke will come to order. The member from Oxford will come to order.

Carry on, please. Finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I believe that this minister knows better certainly than I do the importance of a diverse society that includes and supports all communities, Mr. Speaker. That is what motivates him, and that is what motivates us.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

The member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell will come to order. I have these in my mind. I remember, but it takes so long to get attention. The member from Dufferin—Caledon will come to order. The member from Leeds—Grenville will come to order. Don't point at anybody.

Final supplementary. The member for Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. My riding of Thornhill is in the same area as that of the minister. It is one of the most diverse areas in Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member has to direct the question to the member that it was placed to in the supplementary.

Carry on, please.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Sorry. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. My riding of Thornhill is in the same area as that of the minister in question. It is one of the most diverse areas in Ontario. Included in the diversity are significant numbers of Chinese and Jewish residents. As a member of the Jewish community in Thornhill, I was proud to put my name on the ballot and be elected to represent all of our ethnic communities.

You can, of course, imagine my disappointment to hear of the minister's hurtful comments about the Jewish community in the Chinese media, comments that are obviously in direct contrast to the ministry he is tasked with promoting. Is the minister prepared to resign immediately and seek training to better enable him to represent all ethnic groups?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question. I'm not resigning.

Along with all Ontarians, I take pride in our reputation as an equal, inclusive and multicultural society. In fact, this is why I chose to immigrate to Canada.

Speaker, I call on the Harper government to recognize the important contributions made by all our cultural communities, including Filipino, South Asian and Chinese Canadian. It is important to extend support equally to all cultural communities in our great province. We are fortunate to have so many of them in Ontario. It is what makes Ontarians so unique.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Does the Premier think that private energy traders should be allowed to siphon off ill-gotten profits and leave Ontarians paying the bills?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we have a mixed system in Ontario: We have public companies participating; we have private companies participating in the energy sector. The investment that the private sector has made in Ontario is in the multi-billions of dollars.

The energy system spends roughly \$18 billion to \$20 billion per year. It's an enormous operation. There's unbelievable expertise and experience in the private sector. We're in partnership with the private sector in operating the system.

I'm waiting for the supplementary, because I have some questions for that member.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I look forward to answers, actually, Speaker. It would be novel; it would be welcome.

Ever since Ontario's private energy experiment began, Ontario has been the Wild West for privatized energy trading. The regulator says, "There are presently no market rules" aimed at market gaming. "In not having such a rule, the Ontario market stands alone." The regulator says it's "unrealistic to expect" that private energy traders aren't exploiting those loopholes.

Can the Premier tell us when we will see some action to protect consumers?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: When the NDP last formed government, they signed nine private power generating contracts for natural gas plants in a five-year span.

But I would like to know from the critic from the third party what their plan is for the energy sector. I believe they're opposed to new nuclear. They haven't said yes to new nuclear. They're against refurbishment. They're talking about 50%, plus or minus, of the energy system. How are you going to replace that when you eliminate all nuclear? When will you start, how much will it cost and, most importantly, in a lot of your important ridings, how many jobs will it cost?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Speaker, sometimes I think the Premier is just debating a question, but in this case, I don't think they understand the question. I'll give it another shot.

The Liberal government has had 10 years to address the issue of companies playing games with the private market. For people stuck paying the highest electricity bills in the country, this is just another example of a government that just doesn't seem to care about the mess in Ontario's electricity system.

After years of inaction, the regulator is now consulting on how to solve the problem, but we've seen consultations stretch for years. People looking at their bills, trying to pay them, need to know that their interests are going to be protected.

Can the Premier tell us when, if ever, she plans to take some action on people gaming the system?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I was fortunate enough to be out of politics for three or four years several years ago, and I was more fortunate to have been on the board of the Independent Electricity System Operator, IESO, which manages the system. Not only do they manage the system, but they work co-operatively with every other jurisdiction in North America to manage the system so that it's secure, safe and so that there's no gaming.

You can find the banking industry, you can find the legal profession, you can find any operation where people are trying to break the rules and try to tighten them up—the IESO is among the most respected in North America in terms of managing the electricity system, in-

cluding the energy market, and you should be aware of that after all of these years.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes, and, frankly, they say the rules aren't in place to protect the system.

Another question, with your indulgence, Speaker, to the Premier: That was just another example of a system that's not being run to protect the people of Ontario. Jane from Toronto wrote to us: "Being on a fixed income, every dollar counts, and to have hydro being dumped cheaply to the US is simply unacceptable."

But the Premier has told Ontarians that bills will be going up 42% over the next five years, and her minister has dismissed concerns about subsidizing energy exports to the US. Does the Premier think the status quo is working for Jane?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We initiated a program for price mitigation about 13 or 14 months ago, the industrial electricity incentive, and there are companies that are benefitting from power reduction costs by about 50%, accessing that.

To be clear, the way they are financing those lower prices is by using our own surplus power. We've gone from a deficit to a surplus in power. We're using that surplus of power to reduce prices for industrial consumers. We also have a significant number of mitigations, but I want to talk about our long-term energy plant in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

1100

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I would appreciate it more if he would answer my question in the supplementary.

People are working harder than ever just to stay afloat. Internal federal government reports say that the middle class is being hollowed out because the cost of living keeps rising. Alex from Ottawa wrote to us: "I agree that the high energy costs in Ontario are not favourable to the hard-working middle class."

Does the Premier understand that skyrocketing hydro prices are making it harder for people to get into the middle class and to stay there when they get there?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Our government is paying maximum attention to mitigating electricity prices. We spent \$31 billion making the system reliable and clean. That put some pressure on prices. We're moving forward. We are taking costs out of the system, and the same price increase that he's referring to, the same graph, the same data show that over the next 20 years our average increase will be 2.8% and 2.3% for industrial.

They don't have a policy on energy. I want to hear what they are going to do. Their leader, when asked, "Can you lower prices?" said, "No."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: People know that hydro bills are taking a bigger and bigger chunk out of their household

budget. Clare from Burlington knows the effect on her family. She wrote to say, "I make a good living, and the high bills still really hurt our family budget. I can't imagine the strain on workers who make less."

For 10 years hydro has been getting more expensive, and the Liberal government has said those bills will go up 42% in the next five years. What does the Premier have to say to people like Clare?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I would hope, as a good MPP, he would tell his constituents that first of all we've put the 10% discount on every bill. Secondly, the Ontario energy and property tax credit gives a tax credit of \$963 per year for qualifying individuals—medium- and low-income people. That also gives a benefit of \$1,097 per year for qualifying seniors.

Did that member advise that constituent that those benefits are there, that those privileges are there by tax credit? Did you? Yes or no?

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. Minister, you are spending money like it's the Russian Olympics. During my morning coffee this Saturday, I came across a half-page colour ad intended to convince me that temporary construction jobs for Pan Am are a huge win, but the only win here is that the minister of Pan Am job is actually temporary, especially given your recent alienating comments.

Show us that you are the minister responsible for these multicultural games and tell us how much of our money you spent on the temporary Pan Am jobs.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question. Speaker, I'll give you one example. One of the largest items in additional investment is the athletes' village, which is about \$700 million. That makes up about 70% of the \$1 billion. The village has always been the responsibility of the host jurisdiction and outside the \$1.4-billion operating budget.

TO2015 is the organization that runs the games in terms of staging events, in terms of overall planning, and, also, P/PAGS is responsible for transportation and security. We are working very hard. As you know, there is only one year and five months until the games, so at the moment we have a lot to do, but we are sure we are going to complete it, come July 2015.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Minister, I'm really glad after two years you came clean on the Pan Am village, by the way, but that wasn't the question.

Minister, let me tell you how much you blew on these ads. You blew exactly \$41,000 on this one-off Pan Am ad; for colour, it cost you an extra \$15,000. That's way too much. You could have skipped the colour alone and sponsored an athlete yourself.

Your priorities are totally out of line and your peers know it too. In fact, a full-time babysitting team has been put in place requiring the minister to report biweekly to

the Premier's office and to cabinet offices. The truth is, he's a designated ribbon-cutter, and, later, he's going to be the Liberal fall guy.

Minister, save yourself. Step down and allow someone who has their priorities straight to actually lead these games once and for all.

Hon. Michael Chan: I'm very pleased to inform that the Pan Am Games are on time, on budget and, perhaps, ahead of time and also under budget.

The member opposite's allegation has zero credibility. Allow me to give you some examples. Speaker, he issued his own press release about the village's cost, but told the public he did not know it wasn't in the \$1.4-billion budget afterwards. He says he's a human resource expert, but has not heard of a completion incentive program. That's new to me. He claims security is going to cost \$1 billion, which is absolutely wrong. He publically claimed our PASO reception in October was five times the actual cost. Those are zero-credibility allegations.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Last week, AMPCO issued a report confirming what most of us already know, namely, that Ontario has by far the highest hydro rates for industrial users of any comparable jurisdiction. No one knows this better than the residents of southwestern Ontario, where tens of thousands of good-paying manufacturing jobs have been lost because of this government's high hydro rate policies.

This simply can't go on. When are we going to see an end to the job-killing hydro rate policies that have crippled manufacturing in southwestern Ontario and throughout the rest of the province?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we meet regularly with AMPCO. We have a very good working relationship with them. We regularly accept their advice. The numbers that were in the Star article referring to that particular survey do not include price mitigation programs such as the industrial electricity incentive, which reduces rates for qualifying companies by up to 50%; the industrial conservation initiative, which reduces prices by 20%—many of the members of AMPCO participate in that particular program; and the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program: The industrial rates in northern Ontario are among the lowest in Canada, and lower than 44 American states.

We're working hard to mitigate prices and we're continuing to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's interesting to hear the Minister of Energy counter the AMPCO report. It's the reality for the rest of the province. Tens of thousands of good-paying manufacturing jobs lost, and now we hear that the government's own long-term energy plan calls for a 30% increase in industrial hydro prices by 2018.

While Ontario still struggles with an unemployment rate of 7.5%, cities in the southwest are even harder hit:

London, 7.9%; Niagara, 8.8%; Sarnia, 10%. Outrageous hydro rates and increases are killing jobs across southwestern Ontario and across the province.

When good Ontario jobs hang in the balance, how can this government possibly justify a 30% increase to the highest industrial hydro prices in North America?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, she is referring to increases that are, yes, referred to in our own long-term energy plan looking forward to the future. But if she looks to the same graph and she looks at the same data, if the numbers that she's giving have any credibility, then the numbers I'm giving now have credibility, because they're in the same graph of the same document.

The price increases for industrial-commercial electricity, moving forward over the next 20 years, are 2.3%. That compares to at least 3.0%, and the five large provinces have higher projections. But she's got to look at the price mitigation programs. Under the Industrial Electricity Incentive Program, last month, Detour Gold was one of the successful proponents in the first round and claims that the program will save them \$20 million in 2014.

I met with one of the Conservative caucus members, with one of his clients, and we went through the details of that company. If they get in touch with their LDC and IESO, they can find ways to reduce their rates.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Steven Del Duca: My question today is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, I have spoken on a number of occasions with a variety of northern Ontario organizations and I've had the opportunity to visit municipalities like Timmins, Elk Lake and Espanola. Speaker, I am very proud to be part of a government that understands the importance of the north and the importance of the mining sector for our province.

1110

Ontario is among the top 10 mineral investment jurisdictions in the world. As a result, 24 new mines have opened here over the last 10 years, and that's more than anywhere else in Canada. Currently, the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada is holding its 2014 annual convention here in Toronto. Can the Minister of Northern Development and Mines please update the House with respect to this annual convention and explain how it is showcasing Ontario's mining sector?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It's a great opportunity to tell the members of the Legislature about the Prospectors and Developers Association conference, PDAC, which started yesterday. With the Premier, I was able to host our annual Ontario reception welcoming many of the delegates: municipal leaders, industry leaders, First Nation, Métis and a number of my colleagues. It's great to have them here; a wonderful event.

Certainly, PDAC is a tremendous opportunity for us to showcase the many successes of the province's mining sector at our Ontario pavilion, which we are actually opening up this afternoon, officially at 1 o'clock. We ask

you to join us. It's a remarkable convention—well over 25,000 to 30,000 delegates every year.

One thing we want to continue to make clear is that the province remains one of the most attractive destinations for mineral exploration investment in North America. In 2003, explorations were \$193 million; last year, over \$600 million. I look forward to providing more details in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'm sure you will.

Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the minister, I thank him for not only his response, but the extraordinary work that he's doing on behalf of the people of Ontario.

I want to thank the minister for his update. Frankly, Speaker, those figures that he referenced are impressive. I'm certainly pleased that Ontario is hosting this important international conference. I'm certain that the international delegates who are here will enjoy all that the city of Toronto has to offer. Hopefully, they'll also have a chance to explore other beautiful parts of our province.

As we all know, the mining industry is very important not only for northern Ontario, but for the entire province. I know that our government continues to engage both corporate and First Nations partners to make sure we are creating the dynamic and innovative business climate that we need for this sector.

Speaker, through you to the minister: How is our government showcasing our support for such an important industry at this convention?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm very, very grateful to the member from Vaughan for the question because it certainly is important for us to create and to support a dynamic business climate for the mining sector. It really is also about achieving a balance. We are providing tax credits, we're providing grants and geological data that is so crucial to the sector. We are very much demonstrating our leadership, working through, of course, the historic modernization of Ontario's Mining Act. That again is promoting a vibrant, competitive industry, helping to keep Ontario a world leader in the industry.

We need to work with the mining companies, First Nations, Métis nations, other government partners and municipalities to improve our province's competitiveness without compromising our environmental responsibilities. By attending this tremendous annual convention, Speaker, we're able to strengthen our relationship with our key partners in the mining sector and continue to grow the economy.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. I want to ask the minister about her decision to ration personal support services for Ontario seniors.

Speaker, when the minister announced the government's assisted living for high-risk seniors policy, what the minister did not tell us is that up to 80% of current

applicants would receive no benefits under the current rules. She also didn't tell us that seniors who are now getting essential services on-site in their seniors' buildings would be cut from those services.

Here's an email which many of my colleagues and I'm sure hers are getting from across the province. It reads as follows: "The seniors are devastated because they recently found out the province is de-funding the alternative community living program and CHATS will not be available seven days a week, 24 hours a day." The question from this constituent is, "How is it possible to have these disabled seniors lose their services?"

Speaker, I'd like her to answer.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to talk about how we are strengthening the home care sector and the community care sector. In fact, this is our single most important priority, and our money is where our mouth is on this one. In the last budget, we increased community and home care support by 6%. We were able to achieve that only by holding steady on a number of other elements of our health care system. As a result of our investments, 200,000 more seniors are getting the care they need in their home, in their community.

Speaker, the home care sector is an increasingly important part of our health care system as we shift services to the community, where people get the care they need in the place with the highest quality for them, and that is in their home whenever possible. We are expanding services in the community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, that rhetoric is not going to go over with the seniors in this province who are losing their services.

In a memorandum dated June 19, 2013, the community and health services department of York region announced that the new Ministry of Health policy would have serious implications for seniors in York region. Not only would the level of personal support services be reduced, but, according to that memo, it warned that more than 80% of current applicants would not receive any services.

The minister said the money is where their mouth is. I'll tell you where their money is: It is in scandals. It is in eHealth—lost precious millions. It is in gas plant losses. It is in her track record of not giving precious medications and prescriptions to the people who need them most. It is in her lack of oversight at Ornge—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Frank Klees: That's where the money is, and that's why they're now rationing services for seniors in this province.

I want to know from the minister, will she rescind that policy today—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's important that the member opposite actually hear the facts about what is happening. I will be the first to say that we are changing how we are delivering care in this province, and we are changing it for the better. CCACs help over 650,000 people get the care they need in the community. That is 200,000 more people than when you were in office.

We've increased the number of patients who are going home after a hospital visit by 26%. These are people who otherwise would have been destined for long-term care. They are getting more supports in their home, where they can live with a high quality of life where they want to be. Over the past two years alone, we have increased the number of people receiving home care services by 76,000, and we are continuing to expand. In order to do that, we need our PSWs working in home care, and we have plans for that as well.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Last week, I asked this government whether they would support an NDP request to bring our troubled CCAC system in front of a legislative committee. I heard a whole lot of messaging and some lukewarm support, but this afternoon I will be tabling a motion that will allow the Legislature to take immediate action on the growing problems at our CCACs.

Can the minister tell Ontarians whether she will support this request to finally take action with CCACs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said to the member from Newmarket–Aurora, community care is where we are investing significant new resources. That community care sector is an increasingly important part of our health care system. We need to continue to get the highest possible quality of care and the best possible value for money from those home care dollars. Speaker, I can assure you that as we invest more in the home care sector, that is taking pressure off hospitals as their ALC rates come down and as the wait-lists for long-term care are actually getting shorter, not longer.

I am committed to home care; I am committed to community care. I am committed to strengthening the home care and community care sectors, and I welcome all advice on how to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm not talking about home care; I'm talking about those agencies, the community care access centres, and the number of problems that they are facing. We went on a LHIN review committee, and we heard more complaints against CCACs than we did against the LHINs.

Speaker, this government is fond of repeating the same lines and making promises that have no clear timeline attached. For months, we have heard that legislation will be introduced that could cap CEO salaries, but after years of pushing for executive pay caps, New Democrats

want to see this government take action, not make more promises. I ask again, will the minister support this urgent review of CCACs?

1120

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do think it's important, and I know the member opposite does know that CCACs are the body that manage our home and community care sector. So you can't underestimate the value of that coordination.

We are spending \$260 million more this year than last year. That's one year's increase in the home and community care sector. Some \$110 million of that will meet home care growth and service demand. There is \$60 million allocated towards a five-day target for complex patients requiring personal support services. Some \$15 million is allocated to achieving a five-day wait time for nursing services in all LHINs and 75 million additional dollars to community supports, organizations such as Meals on Wheels and adult day programs that help support the people who need the care and their caregivers as well. This is a very important focus of our ministry's strategic plan. It is central to the implementation of our action plan for health care.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. This government has been investing in people, investing in badly needed infrastructure and supporting an innovative and dynamic business environment in Ontario. We all recognize that a strong and vibrant aboriginal community strengthens Ontario culturally, socially and economically. I know this first-hand. In my own diverse riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, there is a significant off-reserve aboriginal population. While we make progress across many different areas, can you inform this House on how we have been helping to improve and create greater economic opportunities in aboriginal communities in Ontario?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that question. We've been active on many fronts, creating many opportunities for both the private sector and communities to participate in a meaningful way and to help Ontario's economy. One such way that we are doing that is something I recently announced, the continuation of the New Relationship Fund, which is a part of the government's economic plan that is creating jobs for today and tomorrow. This comprehensive plan and its six priorities focus on Ontario's greatest strengths: its people and its strategic partnerships. Through the New Relationship Fund, Ontario is supporting aboriginal organizations as they build consultation capacity and industry partnerships, and engage in sustainable development. That's good for Ontario's economy, and that's good for First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker, and through you, thank you to the minister for that update on the New Relationship Fund. Obviously, this is a great investment

in helping people, communities and businesses, and helping to create a more robust business environment.

With my colleagues, I've had the opportunity to meet aboriginal and First Nations groups across Ontario. In January, for example, I had the chance to visit Moose Factory, Ontario and meet with representatives from the Moose Cree First Nation, so indeed, I know how important this investment is across Ontario to our aboriginal communities.

Through you, Speaker: Will the minister expand further on just what is happening with this investment and how it is helping our aboriginal communities?

Hon. David Zimmer: The fund was originally announced as a four-year commitment in 2008, but it has been so successful that we will continue to invest in the New Relationship Fund on an ongoing basis. Here are some facts about it: We've enhanced the value to better meet the needs of the aboriginal communities by increasing the amount available in core consultation funding from \$80,000 to \$90,000 per year. What does that actually mean? What happens then? Well, over the five years that the fund has been in existence, there have been 540 jobs created across Ontario. This provides skills and training to thousands of aboriginal people. The fund has supported a further 500 projects undertaken by 193 First Nation and Métis communities. The fund projects help aboriginal communities hire staff, host meetings, draft business plans and develop important business tools. This is what helps aboriginal communities create businesses. This is what's good for Ontario and the aboriginal community.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. The testimony of the OPP commissioner is very clear. The investigation into the Liberal government over the deleted emails in the gas plants scandal is real, it is ongoing, and it could see jail time of up to 14 years for anybody who has committed a crime.

The time has come for the Premier to follow our lead and call for a judicial inquiry into the \$1-billion gas plants scandal and the role that her party played. So I'm asking the Premier today: Will the Premier show some integrity and announce a judicial inquiry into the \$1.1-billion gas plants scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm a little bit disappointed in the member for the question that she has just raised. At the end of the day, we have a situation where the OPP, we are aware, is looking into a matter. I think that members of this House are very aware that we allow the police, we allow law enforcement to do their work. We don't draw conclusions or, as she has done, make insinuations here in the Legislature. Let's allow the police to undertake their work.

What Commissioner Lewis confirmed to the committee is that he is getting excellent co-operation from the

government and those that he is asking questions of. There will be a point when he will report back, and until then, as I said, Mr. Speaker, I think this question is really beneath that member.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, that answer was actually beneath that minister. That's probably why he's deciding to run away from this place after the next election.

The Premier admitted that the gas plants cancellation was a political decision. We know it wasted \$1.1 billion that could have been used to ensure children across this province get the medication they need for their severe diseases rather than have to take their fight here to Queen's Park.

She has been Premier for over a year. She has lost four MPPs in that time. She has lost her campaign manager. In fact, she's even losing you. Her government is in decline. The OPP is investigating. The OPP was very clear that there could be jail time for any crimes committed by this government. Her priorities are not those of this province.

So I will ask again: If they will not call a judicial inquiry, as our leader, Tim Hudak, has asked, will they at least call an election?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let the member from Renfrew sit down.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I just want to say on a personal note that I appreciated her warm remarks.

You can't run from it. The fact of the matter is, in the last election it was the leader of her party who was on YouTube saying that if he was Premier of this province, he would—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's not my leader who's being investigated.

Hon. John Milloy: —cancel the gas plants.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carlton will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't need arm-chair quarterbacks. I would wish this to stop while I'm speaking.

Finish, please.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, it was her party that had candidates going out knocking on doors, sending out tweets, having robocalls saying the only way to cancel the gas plants was to elect the Progressive Conservative Party as the government. The fact of the matter, which she cannot escape, is that every party in this Legislature had the exact same promise.

The question before us is, how in the future can we ensure that the siting of gas plants is done in a better way? That is what this side of the House wants to deal with.

I think it's time that they came clean.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is for the Premier. Good morning, Premier. Rising hydro costs in this province are threatening the livelihoods of small business people. In Windsor, more than 30 small business owners have complained to Larry Horwitz, chair of the Downtown Windsor Business Improvement Association.

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Do you know Larry? That's a good thing.

They're worried about the cost of their hydro now, let alone a 40% increase coming over the next five years. This rising cost of hydro may force many of them out of business.

What solutions can the Premier offer to small business owners in Windsor and in the rest of Ontario?

1130

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: There's a short-term solution, and there are long-term solutions. The medium- and long-term solutions are in our long-term energy plan. We're reducing annual increases for the industrial-commercial sector to 2.3%. The National Energy Board has the 20-year projections for all of the provinces, and Ontario is the lowest moving forward, because we're not going ahead with a \$15-billion investment in new nuclear, we're not going ahead with \$3.7 billion of power purchase contracts with Samsung, and we're running a more efficient service. Those numbers, those calculations, are in the long-term energy plan. When we get to the supplementary, I'll talk about some short-term solutions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: EnWin, the local provider in Windsor for hydro—they have a real concern, because they're charging the same rates now that they charged customers in 2006, while the increases in hydro rates are on the provincial portion of the bill.

Will this government assure small businesses it has a plan to fix its broken hydro policies before they're forced to close?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We are addressing issues concerning small business. First of all, very small businesses have access to the 10% discount on their bill, as well as farmers. For those slightly larger businesses—if they work closely with their LDC, there are very significant conservation measures to minimize prices.

In addition, I personally have been consulting with small business groups. We are looking at ways and means to support them moving forward, and we hope that in the foreseeable future we'll have some price mitigation that will be very well received by small business.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Ontario's capacity to com-

pete in the global economy is partly based on our ability to foster highly talented researchers. Canada is currently ranked sixth in the world in quality and impact of research, with Ontario comprising nearly half of the national research expertise.

In my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River, I'm often asked by constituents if it is a good idea for their children to study science during their post-secondary education. As a parent, the answer is pretty obvious. However, I believe there needs to be more done to encourage students to pursue this path.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is the government doing to foster and lend support to research and innovation in the province that will encourage more young people to get involved in this field?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I would like to thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for that question.

Mr. Speaker, investing in research—in breakthrough research—has always been the priority for this government because it creates jobs. Our government is supporting innovative and dynamic research. These researchers are creating the jobs for tomorrow, and our investment today in research is going to pay tomorrow to create jobs.

Recently, we have announced \$190 million for the Ontario Research Fund. Some \$65 million out of this fund will go to the Ontario Research Fund–Research Excellence Program to support 140 research projects across the province. This fund has led to the recruitment and training of 17,000 highly qualified researchers who are running our research institutions.

Investing in programs such as the Ontario Research Fund ensures that our brightest minds and their innovative ideas remain in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: It is good to hear that our government is committed to supporting researchers through programs like the Ontario Research Fund. Providing the necessary resources and support for researchers is critical to our long-term economic prosperity. However, keeping young, innovative minds in the province is also necessary to create the jobs of tomorrow.

As a parent, I'm always pleased when I speak with students in my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River who have both a keen interest in the sciences and a strong entrepreneurial spirit.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is the government doing to help take the ideas of young minds to the next level and create jobs for tomorrow?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for that question.

The Ontario government is committed to supporting young entrepreneurs by providing the support they need to grow and succeed in their business. Just recently, our government announced the Ontario Youth Investment Accelerator Fund. This fund is a part of the Ontario government's youth entrepreneurs—to bring their investments into the market. We have invested \$295 million in Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy, and \$7 million of this

fund goes to the Ontario Youth Investment Accelerator Fund.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the importance of youth entrepreneurship in a dynamic economy such as ours.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Premier. Premier, yesterday on your radio show, Shellie Correia phoned in to voice her concerns about the negative health effects that wind turbines are having on her son. You failed to answer her question yesterday about the wind turbines, but maybe you will decide that you will answer the question I have for you today. Do you believe that the intent of the Oak Ridges moraine act was to include 50-storey wind turbines?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I believe I did take the question from the caller that the member is speaking to, Mr. Speaker, and what I said was—I will paraphrase, because I don't remember exactly what I said. But what I know is that we made a decision about green energy—that is exactly true—and that we want clean, renewable energy. We've shut down all the coal-fired plants. We made that decision, that that was in the best interests of the air quality in this province and people across the province, and the health of children. That is a point I will continue to make, because it underpins the reason that we moved into green energy.

The other issue is the creation of 31,000 jobs. There are contracts in place; there are approvals under way, Mr. Speaker. I know that the member opposite is aware of all of those things.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Premier, your government, through the Ministry of the Environment, approved an industrial wind farm with turbines the size of Toronto skyscrapers. Five of these turbines will be built beside what was supposed to be a natural, serene and tranquil Buddhist temple in my riding. These turbines will impact the Oak Ridges moraine, which is an environmentally sensitive geological landform that is protected under the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.

Your government promised better communication with communities in siting these turbines. You did repeat that on your radio show yesterday. You failed to answer the people of Ontario who called in to your radio show. You failed to consult these communities as promised. Will you make things right and call a moratorium on these wind turbines?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I was very pleased to be on the radio show and to take calls along with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure and along with Teresa Di Felice from CAA. There were lots of questions

that came in. We took as many as we could in the time that was available.

I acknowledged that the issues around the siting of wind turbines have been contentious. I also made it clear, and I make it clear again, that we have put new rules in place. We said we were going to change the process, to give communities more input into where those pieces of energy infrastructure would be sited. We have done that, and we will continue to advocate for clean energy.

There was an energy innovation summit here last week. People from across the country and outside of the country were here to share ideas about how we can do more to conserve and create clean energy in Ontario and beyond.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. Last year the government tried to prevent the release of information on AODA compliance by charging hefty fees to the AODA Alliance. But the FOI that the AODA Alliance was forced to resort to revealed why the government did not want to disclose this information: 70% of Ontario private sector organizations with 20 or more employees had not filed mandatory self-reports on their compliance with the AODA customer service accessibility standard. The government knew that they were failing to effectively enforce their own standards and they didn't want Ontarians to know this disturbing fact.

Why is the Premier withholding information, and will she finally take action to enforce the AODA?

1140

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I need to challenge the premise of the question. We are working to make sure that Ontario is the most accessible jurisdiction in the world. We have taken leadership in terms of a regulatory regime that mandates accessibility. We're the first in the world to require staff to be trained on accessibility. We're the first in Canada with legislation that sets out a clear goal and a time frame for accessibility by 2025.

I have personally met with David Lepofsky a number of times since I have been in this office, and we have had this discussion about enforcement and how we can increase the compliance by putting more enforcement measures in place.

But the fact is that we are in a transition. There is no doubt about that, and it is going to take some time for all of our institutions and businesses to comply. We are going to encourage and we're going to work with them, and we're going to make this jurisdiction the most accessible in the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Back to the Premier. I reiterate: 70% of Ontario private sector organizations did not comply with mandatory rules that this government set. The minister responsible for the implementation of the AODA pledged to enforce the law until there was full compliance. He said that it was his "top priority." Yet the

government has taken no concrete actions, according to David Lepofsky, and has no plan in place to enforce its own standards.

The government is failing to make Ontario accessible to those with disabilities, and they only have themselves—that is, the government—to blame. Why should Ontarians believe that accessibility is a priority for this government after months and months of empty promises?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't know whether the member opposite is aware, but in November of last year, approximately 2,500 enforcement notices were issued to organizations that had failed to comply and submit 2012 accessibility compliance reports. So letters were sent out. Almost half of those organizations that received an enforcement notice responded by filing their overdue reports. The remaining organizations required to file are being issued director's orders with financial penalties. Many of those have already been issued. And these notices were in addition to the approximately 50,000 letters sent in the summer of 2013 to businesses, notifying them of their obligation, as well as offering them supports to help them meet the goal.

It is imperative, now that we have put the regime in place—the standards are in place—that we now work with businesses and we make them aware of what the requirements are. That's what we're doing. We are in communication with them and we will continue to enforce that compliance.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo on a point of order, first.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just wanted to welcome member of Parliament Romeo Saganash from Abitibi–Baie-James–Nunavik–Eeyou and MP Claude Gravelle from the riding of Nickel Belt to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Earlier today, the Premier, in response to questions directed at her regarding comments made by the Minister of Culture—as we are aware, in this chamber, you cannot say indirectly what you cannot say directly, and I believe that rules 23(h) and (k) were breached. Allow me to explain.

Rule 23(h): I believe that the Premier, in an indirect way, accused every member of this caucus of having racist views and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've heard enough. Thank you. I listened very carefully to question period. I listened to the questions and I listened to the answers. Although I would prefer more temperate exchanges in this place, as many people do, I did not hear anything unparliamentary. So I'll leave it at that. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm still standing.

MEMBER'S PRIVILEGE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London has given me notice of his intention to raise a point of privilege. His point relates to the legislation establishing the eastern and southwestern Ontario development funds and a provision in it that states, "If a public announcement is to be made about the provision of financial assistance or incentives within eastern Ontario or southwestern Ontario, as the case may be, the MPP who represents the affected area within the region must be given the opportunity to participate in the announcement."

The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London states that such a public announcement has recently been made in his riding, but that he was given no notice, nor the opportunity to participate as required by the legislation.

I am prepared to rule on this point of privilege without hearing further from the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, as standing order 21(d) permits me to do.

It is well established in parliamentary procedure that the application of privilege is confined to the proceedings in Parliament and to the activities of members in their parliamentary roles. Speakers of this Legislature and elsewhere have consistently ruled that a member's work outside of the Legislature, and especially constituency-related matters, does not give rise to the protection of privilege.

As stated at page 117 of House of Commons Procedure and Practice, "In instances where members have claimed that they have been obstructed or harassed, not directly in their roles as elected representatives but while being involved in matters of a political or constituency-related nature, Speakers have consistently ruled that this does not constitute privilege."

This position has been taken by Speakers of this Legislature as well. For instance, on April 26, 2001, ruling by Speaker Carr noted that "Speakers have consistently found—supported by the procedural authorities and a multitude of precedents—that privilege attaches only to a member's parliamentary duties, and not to subsidiary duties away from Parliament."

On May 4, 2010, Speaker Peters noted in a ruling that "According to the procedural authorities and many previous Speakers' rulings, parliamentary privilege protects members in the execution of their strictly parliamentary duties—not the constituency or other duties that may fairly be said to be part of their job descriptions."

On this point, the second edition of Maingot's Parliamentary Privilege in Canada states the following on pages 222 and 223: "The interference, however, must not only obstruct the member in his capacity as a member, it must obstruct or allege to obstruct the member in his parliamentary work."

I appreciate that the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London feels that he has been deprived of his ability to do his job—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me—but it is that part of the job that is the important consideration in the case at hand. Simply put, parliamentary privilege is not applicable to the constituency-related work of an MPP.

The member may have a valid grievance, however, and I would note that complying with the law is always a good policy. However, I cannot find that a *prima facie* case of privilege has been made out.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FOOD LITERACY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: On Saturday, I was pleased to speak at the Building Food Skills for Eating Well conference in London. It was organized by the Ontario Home Economics Association as part of their efforts to address the need for more food education, and I want to commend and congratulate them on that.

Too many students are graduating high school or even university without basic cooking skills, nutritional knowledge and understanding of where their food comes from. At the conference, they talked about new parents who aren't confident in their ability to cook for their children. They talked about how food education leads to healthier people.

We need to increase food literacy. That's why the PC caucus put forward an amendment to the Local Food Act to require food education in all grades to ensure that all students learn the importance of nutrition, how to buy and cook fresh food, and where that food comes from.

At the conference, they announced the results of a study from Western University, which found 94% support for our amendment to require food education in all grades—Mr. Speaker, 94%. Unfortunately, government members blocked that amendment at committee, but I want to assure everyone that the PC caucus will continue to work to increase food education, as will the Ontario Home Economics Association and many other people and organizations.

This week, we are celebrating agriculture literacy week, and I want to challenge the government not just to talk about it but to take concrete action this week to increase both agriculture and food literacy.

BOWL FOR KIDS SAKE

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a pleasure for me to rise today and update the House regarding a wonderful event that took place just yesterday in my terrific community of Vaughan.

As I said, just yesterday, Sunday, March 2, marked the annual A&B Courier Bowl for Kids Sake. This event encourages participants to build bowling teams that com-

pete in the spirit of raising money for Big Brothers Big Sisters of York region. Every dollar raised for this event is then used to match a child in my community with a mentor.

It's been proven that children who've been mentored have higher self-esteem and are more likely to stay in school. Big Brothers Big Sisters does an excellent job of facilitating these life-changing mentorship opportunities, empowering our youth to succeed and realize their true potential.

Since 2003, our government has been committed to investing in Ontario's young people. We've invested in schools, making Ontario a world leader in education. In fact, just last Friday, I was pleased to announce the opening of a new school in Kleinburg with Education Minister Liz Sandals. Minister Piruzza also announced the youth-in-transition program last week, which will help those young people leaving the care of children's aid societies.

Organizations like Big Brothers Big Sisters share our commitment to helping Ontario's youth succeed, something that everyone in this House should, and I know does, support.

I want to thank the event organizers and all those who attended this weekend. By working together, we can ensure that Ontario's youth have a bright and prosperous future.

VIOLENCE AWARENESS AND RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS PROGRAM

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, don't be surprised if the driver in front of you pays for your order at a Belleville drive-through this week, a bouquet of flowers ends up on your desk in Quinte West just because, or your neighbour shovels your driveway in Prince Edward county. It's Random Acts of Kindness Week across the Quinte region.

Who would have thought that anything positive could have come from the senseless murders of three Belleville teenagers in three separate incidents in the early months of 1996?

I'll never forget the call I received in the Quinte Broadcasting newsroom telling me that Mark Fyke, a popular teenager, was robbed and then shot and killed while talking to his mom on a payphone while on spring break in Daytona Beach, Florida. Just a few months later, Becky Middleton was horrifically murdered while on vacation with a family friend on the island of Bermuda. And Shawn Keegan was found dead here in Toronto, also a victim of homicide.

It was a torturous time of mourning and grief for family, friends and the Quinte community at large. But from those inexplicable deaths a tradition was born. Mark Fyke's mother, Christine Macdonald, and aunt Pam Smith the very next year started the Violence Awareness and Random Acts of Kindness program in remembrance of Mark and in recognition of other victims of violence like Becky and Shawn.

For the 18th consecutive March, blue ribbons will be pinned on lapels, wrapped around telephone poles and taped on doorways across Quinte. A Kindness Citizen of the Year will be awarded at Quinte Mall tonight. Dozens of school kids will be awarded bursaries as a result of those three random acts of violence.

We shouldn't need a special week to promote kindness, but this week, especially, random acts of kindness will be commonplace across Quinte.

WOMEN IN SKILLED TRADES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members' statements? The member from Mississauga East–Cooksville—the member from Essex. Rotation is necessary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate it.

It's an honour to acknowledge local efforts by Women's Enterprise Skills Training of Windsor, which is working on initiatives to remove skilled trades employment barriers to make it easier for women to attain careers and financial success.

Women's Enterprise Skills Training of Windsor—WEST—exists to provide training for severely disadvantaged visible-minority women in order to improve their employability in the workforce and to further their education.

According to a needs assessment recently produced by WEST, only 42.4% of women surveyed in the Windsor area were aware of what constituted a skilled trade, and 66% of them said that they wouldn't consider a job in the trades.

Bringing grade schools, high schools, provincial apprenticeship programs, and colleges and universities on board will certainly help in providing young girls and women the support they need to consider the trades as a viable career alternative.

They're also doing some special things around language, replacing “non-traditional” with “under-represented” in the vocabulary, because language alone creates walls and barriers that we want to break down so that all girls and young women can see the trades as an opportunity to become successful.

Speaker, 30 years ago Terry Weymouth became one of the first licensed apprentices in southwestern Ontario. Also, Shelley Harding-Smith, who was from the Windsor area, was one of the first 309A licensed electricians in Ontario. They are inspirations to young women in our region to show that the trades can be a viable career path for young women.

I applaud WEST; I applaud all the women who serve as inspiration. I want to thank them for all the good work that they're doing in our communities.

COMMUNITY DESIGN NIGHT

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Last Thursday, on February 27, it was my honour to host and organize, in co-operation with the Credit Valley Conservation authority, a com-

munity design night for my constituents in the Rhonda Valley area, alongside Cooksville Creek.

You'll remember, Mr. Speaker, that on July 8, 2013, the GTA was hit hard with an intense storm that saw 126 millimetres of rainfall in three hours. It was after the storm, while knocking on doors, that I met Anne Vidal, a resident of Rhonda Valley and an engaged citizen. During our conversation on the impact of the storm, we began to think of ways that homeowners can protect their properties from stormwater. The initial conversation led to a number of meetings between myself, Ms. Vidal and the CVC, which eventually led to last Thursday's community design night, held at the Mississauga Valley Community Centre.

The staff from Credit Valley Conservation, led by John Kinkead and Christine Zimmer, showed homeowners how they can incorporate low-impact-development storm management technologies, such as rain gardens, soak-aways and swales. Those attending were quite pleasantly surprised, learning these new strategies.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge once more Anne Vidal. Her tireless efforts and research made our community design night possible. She's a perfect model of the engaged citizen that I'm proud lives in the great riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville.

EPILEPSY AWARENESS MONTH

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise to today to recognize and kick off Epilepsy Awareness Month in the House. This month is an important opportunity for us to increase our understanding of what epilepsy is and how it affects people's daily lives.

Epilepsy is a neurological disorder that causes seizures, which affect a wide range of mental and physical functions. But not all individuals with epilepsy experience the convulsions and loss of consciousness that most of us would identify as epileptic. Many experience symptoms that we would likely not recognize as seizures, with blank staring, lip smacking or abrupt movements of the arms or legs. So it is important that we follow the lead set by Epilepsy Canada in order to increase awareness about the range of symptoms that people with epilepsy experience.

Seizures are, by their very nature, very unpredictable. As a result, epilepsy can be very disruptive of people's daily lives at work, school and other activities. As a result, people with epilepsy may experience anxiety and lower self-confidence.

1310

Unfortunately, epilepsy is often still stigmatized. Sometimes people are reluctant to tell their employers about their epilepsy because they are worried they will face discrimination. Many people are unable to obtain employment in the first place with even modest accommodations. It is essential that we are understanding and flexible about facilitating the full participation of people with epilepsy in all of life's experiences.

I'd like to close by thanking Epilepsy Canada and their chapters across the province for the great work that they do with people each and every day.

FULL CIRCLE CHILD CARE CENTRE

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to talk about the Full Circle daycare, which is located at Westview Presbyterian Church in my riding of Beaches–East York. I had an opportunity to go there last Friday night. I was invited by Denise Boland and the parents and staff of that daycare facility. They had some very real concerns that they wanted me to express in the Legislature, and I promised I would do so at my first opportunity, which of course is today.

The concerns that the daycare parents and the daycare staff had are many. They are worried because, since the advent of all-day kindergarten, it has been very difficult for the parents to deal with both situations. They were hoping that the government would listen and would coordinate the daycares taking the children to and from the schools for after-work or other activities, which is not presently the case and is not allowed by law. They thought that was a good thing.

They were worried about the lack of educational assistants and the funds that are used to pay for them, because they can make much more money, of course, in the schools.

They were worried about government red tape, and they told me many stories about the people who come to look at the daycare centre and how there is so much red tape that they have to undergo. They wonder why they have to do so much as a licensed care facility, when people in unlicensed facilities have virtually nothing imposed upon them at all.

And, of course, last but not least, they were worried about funding in this year's budget. I promised them that I would tell the Minister of Finance that they need more money.

EVENTS IN VENEZUELA

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today. As the world obviously is concerned about the situation that is unfolding in the Ukraine and Crimea, we should also be concerned about something that is happening a little bit closer to home, in Venezuela.

We walk into this house of assembly and we take our duly elected seats knowing that the people that we represent elected us through as transparent a process as we could possibly provide in this country. We've got the privilege of peace, order and good government, and they are the norm rather than the exception. Yet, in spite of that, we often take democracy for granted.

In Venezuela today, thousands of citizens have been rallying in the streets in conflict over the leadership and the economic future of their country. Whether it's our right to judge the way in which other jurisdictions conduct themselves is a contentious issue, but we can all see

as clear as day, I think, that democracy, human rights and economic growth are in question on the streets of Caracas today.

I have a number of very skilled and very professional constituents who left Venezuela during turbulent political and economic times. They see very little evidence of change with the current leadership, and now they see images of violence on the streets of their country.

It's interesting that people flock to our country because of the democratic freedoms we have here. We should take pride in that, but we should also remember those in Venezuela and sincerely hope for a positive resolution in the near future to that situation.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to share the serious concerns of Dufferin–Caledon constituents who are outraged that executive salaries at community care access centres have been steadily increasing while services and front-line health care are on the decline.

In my constituency office, residents share with me their personal experiences about service reductions. CCAC clients and their families struggle to maintain their own daily health care needs when necessary services are withdrawn or dramatically cut back. As recently as this morning, I heard from a man who lives alone and who, since returning home 10 days ago from a hip operation, has received absolutely nothing from the CCAC.

Prior to April 2009, the salary of the Central West CCAC CEO was \$145,887, yet in three short years we have seen a 76% increase, the highest reported increase of the 14 CCACs province-wide. The current Central West CEO's salary is now reported at \$243,890.

While many people are losing their jobs, CCAC CEOs continue to receive exorbitant pay increases.

When is this government going to step up and prioritize our health care dollars by not spending on more administration and bureaucracy but rather on front-line health care services?

Speaker, it's unacceptable. That is why I'm proud to stand with my colleague MPP Christine Elliott and call on the Auditor General to review the out-of-control expenses and salary increases at Ontario's CCACs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we move on, I just want to use this as a moment to strengthen our knowledge of how this place works, particularly with members' statements. From time to time, what happens is, a member is stuck in traffic and they're late and no one else stands up for them in that party, or they would try to see if they can get later in the docket. We always do rotation, and it starts with the PCs, goes to the NDP, then the Liberals. It doesn't always have to be that way. But I just want to caution: If there's any kind of thing going on where you want to get the last word and you're not going to get it—if no one stands, we're finished statements, and we move on. So if it's a game of chicken, you just need to know that if you're playing it, you could

lose. We could all lose. So try to get your rotation done, and we can walk away happy—for everybody.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SOCIAL WORKERS

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I rise today in this assembly to mark Social Work Week in Ontario. Today, we have representatives—I think they're visiting some of the MPP offices—from the governing body of some 16,000 social workers and social service workers. That, of course, would be the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers. They include: Glenda McDonald, the registrar and chief executive officer; Lise Betteridge, the deputy registrar; and Jolinne Kearns, their communications coordinator. I want to thank them for their visit today and for the dialogue that they'll be having with a number of members throughout the day.

The theme of this year's celebration is Social Workers: Champions of Positive Change. I know many of my honourable colleagues would agree that social workers continually support positive change, change that works to improve the lives of so many individuals.

Mr. Speaker, our government invests in a wide range of services to help people in need, but much of that help couldn't get to those people without the dedicated service of professional social workers.

As a member of provincial Parliament—and I'm sure this is true of all of us—I see the positive difference social workers make in the lives of people. As someone who has studied social work at the post-secondary level, along with my colleague from Davenport, Jonah Schein—I think he's a member of the association—I have always been humbled by the personal commitment and caring that professional social workers demonstrate under often intense pressures.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that our province is only as strong as our people. Every day in this province, social workers work hard to restore strength to women and children who are victims of abuse, to people who are homeless and to those who are facing difficult times. Anywhere social workers choose to practise, they help Ontarians make their way through tremendous challenges every single day.

To those who are here today or who may be watching at home, I want to offer a personal thank you. Thank you, social workers, for your continued dedication to Ontario's most vulnerable, and thank you for your commitment to maintaining the highest standards for our valued profession.

1320

As a government, we support our social workers, and we will continue to work with them to build a successful, compassionate and caring province where everyone has the opportunity to connect, contribute and enjoy a high

quality of life. As the minister responsible, I will continue to seek ways to support social workers in their understandable desire to access the professional development funding they are seeking to enhance their skills and keep their skills fresh.

Mr. Speaker, a favourite poet of mine once offered up this quote: Anyone can slay a dragon, but it's the people who get up every single day and try to love the world all over again who are the real heroes.

Our social workers are the real heroes, and I invite all honourable members to join me in recognizing Social Work Week in Ontario and to salute the thousands of men and women who proudly call themselves Ontario's social workers.

GREENBELT

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm very pleased today to report to this Legislature that this past Friday, February 28, was the ninth anniversary of Ontario's greenbelt.

Created by legislation in 2005, the greenbelt was considered a major step in the prevention of development and urban sprawl on environmentally sensitive land in the province. Our greenbelt is a permanently protected area of green space, farmland, forests, wetlands and watersheds.

I want to acknowledge a guest we have with us today in the visitors' gallery who helped make the greenbelt such a great success: Burkhard Mausberg, the CEO of the Friends of the Greenbelt. I know that Dr. Peter Victor, the chair of the Greenbelt Council, wanted to be with us, and I know he's with us in spirit. Both of these organizations are great partners and leading advocates of this province's green spaces.

I also want to congratulate those municipal leaders who are working in their communities to see the greenbelt expanded. In particular, I want to thank Oakville mayor Rob Burton, who happens to be a member of the Municipal Leaders for the Greenbelt, for his leadership in advocating for the greenbelt. On February 10, the town of Oakville unanimously passed a motion asking Halton region to formally request that land along Fourteen Mile Creek be added to the greenbelt under the urban river valley designation. That request was echoed by Halton region council last week, on February 26.

In addition, I want to thank Toronto councillor Glenn De Baeremaeker, who tabled a motion on February 19 to designate public lands along the Humber River, the Don River and the Etobicoke Creek as part of the greenbelt. It was adopted by Toronto council the next day.

This past Friday, on the greenbelt's anniversary, Mississauga council voted to have its public lands in that city's sensitive river valley systems, including the Credit River and Etobicoke Creek, be designated as part of the greenbelt under the urban river valley designation.

Our government is grateful for the strong support of our municipal partners. It is part of the reason for the greenbelt's great success. Many have worked to support the greenbelt and the greenbelt plan since their inception

on February 28, 2005. The plan laid out the boundaries and the policies for the greenbelt. When our government came to power in 2003, we saw what years of unchecked sprawl had done to the greater Golden Horseshoe. We saw the growing gridlock. We saw the steady loss of farmland, and not just any farmland; the greater Golden Horseshoe has more than half of the best agricultural land in all of Canada. It was clear that without action, we were going to lose this vital piece of land forever.

Besides farmland, we were also losing sensitive environmental lands. Grasslands, woodlands, marshes and other natural heritage features were being lost. Our government had to act to create new protections. We met with municipal leaders, scientists and environmentalists. We met with farmers who worked the land. We met with landowners, developers and other stakeholders. And we met with the public.

The result, Mr. Speaker, was the Greenbelt Act of 2005—an act, I might add, that the official opposition, including the Leader of the Opposition, voted against.

Despite the official opposition's unfortunate and short-sighted opposition, Ontario now has the largest permanently protected greenbelt in the world. We have green spaces and working countrysides that together stretch from Rice Lake in eastern Ontario to Niagara in southwestern Ontario. These protected lands also go north to the tip of the Bruce Peninsula. The greenbelt includes the Niagara Escarpment—a UNESCO world biosphere reserve—and the Oak Ridges moraine, one of Ontario's most significant natural heritage areas. In all, the greenbelt covers nearly two million acres; that's an area bigger than Prince Edward Island.

The greenbelt supports our rural communities that contribute so significantly to the greater Golden Horseshoe's quality of life. The towns, villages and hamlets on the greenbelt provide economic, social and commercial benefits to the whole region. In addition, the greenbelt includes the tender fruit lands of Niagara, the cattle farms of Durham region and the market gardens of Holland Landing. In summer and fall, farmers' markets overflow with the produce, meat and dairy products grown and raised on the greenbelt. In my hometown, we are fortunate to have the Brampton Farmers' Market, and every Saturday from June to October, it's the place to go to buy fresh, local, in-season produce.

Mr. Speaker, I pointed out the ecological, the environmental and the nourishing benefits of the greenbelt, but let's not forget the fun. The ski resorts, the hiking and biking trails, the caves, the campgrounds and the wineries are all just a short trip away for southwestern and south-central Ontario residents.

A year ago, we added 630 acres of provincially owned conservation lands in Oakville to the greenbelt. They are called the Glenorchy lands. That expansion was also initiated by Oakville. I want to thank Oakville council, Halton council and Environmental Defence for their work and for their leadership in making the initial request for these lands to be added. I look forward to future anniversaries when we can create an even bigger greenbelt.

When my colleague—now the Attorney General—Minister Gerretsen introduced the Greenbelt Act in this House in November 2004, he began by asking a simple question: What do you want the Golden Horseshoe to look like in the future? Because of our government's belief in a strong economy, vibrant communities, healthy natural landscapes and thriving farmlands, the greenbelt ensures the very best of planning and growth that preserves Ontario's natural habitat for our children and our grandchildren.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

SOCIAL WORKERS

Mr. Rod Jackson: As the minister mentioned, today is the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers Day. It's an interesting day inasmuch that these people are those in our communities that give so much to them yet don't get a lot in return. They do it, not for the accolades; they certainly don't do it for the money. They do it because it's what's in their hearts. They do it because they believe it's the right thing to do. It's a very challenging job, as many of us know. In fact, many of us have constituency assistants that perform a lot of social work type of tasks. Even if it's just at a smaller level, we get a taste of what it's like.

I have lots of friends and family who have benefited from and actually worked with social workers, or who have been the beneficiary of a social worker's work. For us to be able to stand here today and show our gratitude for them and to let everyone who is listening know that we appreciate the work that they do is truly special. It is certainly an opportunity to recognize the contribution of everybody who, every day, helps to ensure Ontario is a caring and just society.

Social workers and social service workers help individuals, families, groups and communities enhance their well-being; help people develop their skills to make them ready for the working world; and respond to a variety of needs, from unemployment to racism to poverty. These are all things that I think, in the society that we live in here in Ontario, we strive to eradicate. They also implement a variety of social assistance programs and assist members of the community to deal with personal and social problems. Quite simply, they make Ontario a better place to live, and that shouldn't go understated.

This is also an opportunity to recognize the college, which strives to protect the interests of the public by regulating the practice of social workers and social service workers by promoting excellence in practice. This year, the college reached a milestone. It registered 1,680 new social and social service workers, bringing their overall membership to 15,000 qualified members, all ready to help fulfill the college's mandate of excellence in serving the public and ensuring that every individual is treated with dignity and respect, and given the tools and the care they need to help them succeed. They make me really proud to be a part of Ontario and that they help the

people that they do be the best they can and live up to their fullest potential. They really do serve their community and are probably the epitome of what community service and what civil service really mean.

1330

GREENBELT

Mr. Michael Harris: I am pleased to take the opportunity to respond to the minister's statement on the anniversary of the greenbelt. The Greenbelt Protection Act, which was passed in June 2004, followed a long legacy of PC leadership on land conservation in the province of Ontario.

Starting more than 100 years ago, PC Premier James Whitney recognized the need for a legislative framework to help permanently protect natural heritage features such as unique landforms, ecosystems and animal life. In a bold step, his government passed Ontario's Provincial Parks Act into law on May 6, 1913. From that point on, successive PC governments followed Whitney's lead, creating hundreds of additional provincial parks and passing important environmental legislation, including the Wilderness Areas Act and the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act. Our party has and continues to understand the importance of protecting natural areas to ensure they can be enjoyed by outdoor enthusiasts, hunters and recreational fishermen.

PC leadership on land conservation culminated in 1999 with the creation of Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy. Under this bold plan, the government of former Premier Mike Harris took steps to expand or create 378 parks and reserves over a 20-year period, a total land area amounting to 2.4 million hectares. Living Legacy was so comprehensive in scope that it provided a strategic direction for the management of 39 million hectares of crown lands and waters. That planning area covers 45% of our province.

We then took a bold step to preserve environmentally sensitive land and ensure clean water for future generations of Ontarians by passing the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001. Indeed, the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment have provided the foundation for what is now referred to as the greenbelt. The greenbelt expanded the province's protected wetlands, natural areas and farmlands around the Golden Horseshoe, bringing the total land area to 1.8 million acres. That's bigger than Prince Edward Island.

With the greenbelt review coming up in 2015, I think it's important that we all work together to find ways to improve this land use plan. One key way to do that is to listen to the voices of farmers and small municipalities, like Lincoln and Grimsby, which have had their growth almost completely curtailed by the greenbelt. Learning from their experiences and taking into account their concerns will help the province make any needed changes.

GREENBELT

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thanks to the minister for the opportunity to speak to this important issue.

Ontario's greenbelt encompasses 1.8 million acres of agricultural and environmentally sensitive land between the Niagara Peninsula and Rice Lake. It's truly an important part of our heritage and our future. As a province, it's essential that we recognize the value of the greenbelt and continue to protect this vital and fertile piece of Ontario while also creating a sustainable development plan for our growing population.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is tasked with ensuring these considerations are top of mind as municipalities proceed with land use planning in the future.

Ontario's land use planning is governed by an array of interconnected pieces of legislation like the Planning Act, provincial policy statements, the Places to Grow Act and many regional policies. As it was created in 2005, it specifically governs planning as it pertains to the greenbelt.

Unfortunately, land use planning in Ontario is not operating with the needed regulation and enforcement, and changes are needed. The Environmental Commissioner, in his report in 2013, stated that Ontario's land use planning is happening in an "information vacuum." The ministry "has neglected its responsibility to ensure that adequate information is collected on the practical functioning of the province's land use plans." Without proper monitoring and evaluation, it's impossible for policy-makers to know if the planning policies are being properly implemented or whether they're even effective. The Environmental Commissioner is very concerned that if we continue to operate without this important information, "Ontario's land use planning system will be blind and unresponsive to the many challenges our province faces in the decades ahead."

So the NDP recommends that the minister review the Environmental Commissioner's annual report so that, when we're reviewing in 2015, appropriate changes are made to make sure that we are making informed and effective land use decisions and that we're monitoring those decisions in the best interests of the future generations of our province.

SOCIAL WORKERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm proud to stand on social workers' day on behalf of Andrea Horwath and the New Democratic Party to herald our social workers across the province. But our social workers need more than nice words; they actually need assistance. This is what I'm hearing from my social workers.

I was in Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre, which is a hub of social work in my riding, when one of the social workers said to me, "I've given up on the housing file because there is no housing." I know that others who work with those who suffer poverty are really throwing up their hands; there's not much they can do. They spend

most of their time fundraising or competing with other service agencies for very small pots of money.

In fact, the Social Planning Network, back a few years ago, did a study, and 60% of the social workers they surveyed—and their agencies—said that their workload had gone up massively, and 65% said that they expected their funding to go down. That is the world of social work in our province: overworked, stressed, underpaid, spending valuable hours trying to get the money they need to keep functioning, instead of providing the service they need to be providing to the people who need it desperately.

I heard over and over again from our social workers that no matter what the setting—schools, hospitals, community agencies—all of them said the same thing: “We need less system and more service. We need adequate funding to do the job, and we certainly need attention paid to the social determinants of health”—of course, the major social determinant being poverty, period. I know that the minister knows this, but we need action.

I come bearing that message from all the social workers in my area, and, I believe, across the province, when they say, “Fine words, but action speaks louder than words. That’s why we became social workers in the first place.”

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

PETITIONS

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Madi Vanstone and her mother, Beth, for sending me this petition. As you know, she was here today to plead for a cystic fibrosis drug that she needs.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas cystic fibrosis is a multi-system genetic disease primarily affecting the lungs and digestive system;

“Whereas one in every 3,600 children born in Canada has cystic fibrosis, making it the most common fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children and young adults;

“Whereas there is no cure for cystic fibrosis, but the drug Kalydeco is the first medication that has shown success in targeting the underlying genetic cause of cystic fibrosis for patients with the specific G551D mutation;

“Whereas this drug helps improve the function of the defective protein, leading to better lung function, weight gain, and lower sweat chloride levels.... access to Kalydeco could lead to a healthier, longer life; and

“Whereas Kalydeco has been approved by Health Canada, but the approximately \$300,000 annual cost makes it an unaffordable treatment option for the overwhelming majority of Ontario families;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care take immediate action to expedite listing Kalydeco on the province’s drug formulary so this treatment is available to Ontario families....”

Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with this petition and I will sign it.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: I’m still getting hundreds of signatures.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads ‘that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles’;

“Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

“Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately.”

I wholeheartedly agree. I affix my signature and give it to page Owen.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn’s, Alzheimer’s, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

1340

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario health insurance plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I affix my name in support.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition that's signed by people from across Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I agree with this petition. I will affix my name and send it up with page Aqil.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry, and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

"Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of technology than having email;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal devices, maximize the many technology offerings and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario....

"In agreement whereof, we affix our signatures"—as do I, Speaker, sending it to you via page Thomas.

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank Caroline Rigutto for getting this petition into my hands. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas cystic fibrosis is a multi-system genetic disease primarily affecting the lungs and digestive system;

"Whereas one in every 3,600 children born in Canada has cystic fibrosis, making it the most common fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children and young adults;

"Whereas there is no cure for cystic fibrosis, but the drug Kalydeco is the first medication that has shown success in targeting the underlying genetic cause of cystic fibrosis;

"Whereas this drug helps improve the function of the defective protein, leading to better lung function, weight gain, and lower sweat chloride levels. For a CF patient with the specific G551D mutation, access to Kalydeco could lead to a healthier, longer life; and

"Whereas Kalydeco has been approved by Health Canada, but the approximately \$300,000 annual cost makes it an unaffordable treatment option for the overwhelming majority of Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care take immediate action to expedite listing Kalydeco on the province's drug formulary so this treatment is available to Ontario families as it is to those in several countries including the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with page Shannon.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the current policies of the McGuinty/Wynne Liberal government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I strongly support this, will affix my name and send it with page Jessica.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: I have more petitions that continue to filter into my office from across the province.

"Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas people who feel they have been wronged by the actions of children's aid societies are left feeling helpless with nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate children's aid societies."

I couldn't agree with this more. I will give it to page Meera to bring to the Clerk.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: "A petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry, and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

"Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of technology than having email;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal devices, maximize the many technology offerings and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario....

"In agreement whereof, we affix our signatures"—as do I, sending it to you via page Kevin.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and....

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method;....

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I support this, and I'll send it to the desk with my signature affixed.

1350

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to introduce a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

Speaker, I'd be pleased to affix my signature and send it to the clerks' table with page Sarah.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have a petition from Ajax-Pickering.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham are at the final stages of completing an EA for the YD-WPCP (York Durham water pollution control plant's) outfall; and

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham have chosen as the final solution an alternative which will not address the quantity of total phosphorus (TP) nor soluble reactive phosphorus (SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario; and

"Whereas Lake Ontario has been identified as the most stressed lake of the Great Lakes in the July/August 2013 issue of Canadian Geographic; and

"Whereas the town of Ajax and PACT POW (Pickering Ajax Citizens Together—Protecting our Water) have documented the excessive algae blooms on the Ajax waterfront with photos and complaints to the region of Durham; and

"Whereas SRP, and indirectly TP, contribute to the growth of algae in Lake Ontario;

"Therefore we undersign this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and ask that the government of Ontario require the regions of York and Durham to implement an alternative that will reduce the amount of phosphorus ... being deposited into Lake Ontario from the YD-WPCP."

I will attach my name to that, Mr. Speaker, and pass it to Michael.

DIABETES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government implemented cuts to the Ontario health insurance program such that Ontario residents suffering from diabetes saw their annual eligibility for blood sugar test strips reduced to 200 per year, less than one a day; and

"Whereas a blood sugar test strip costs approximately 70 cents; and

"Whereas this latest cut to services to Ontario patients is just another misguided measure to nickel-and-dime Ontarians; and

"Whereas a focus on preventing disease and hospitalization is in the long-term interest of patients, their families and the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately reinstate full and unlimited eligibility for blood sugar test strips covered by OHIP for all Ontario residents suffering from diabetes."

I agree with this petition and will be passing it off to page Owen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time that we have available this afternoon for petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 POUR UN SALAIRE MINIMUM ÉQUITABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 27, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 165, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the minimum wage / Projet de loi 165, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le salaire minimum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated Bill 165 at second reading, the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex had the floor. He still has time. I recognize the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Speaker. I was glad to rise to speak last week to this bill, Bill 165, I believe for about almost 11 minutes last week. We'll continue here for another 49 minutes and talk about some of the concerns we have about Ontario's economy, about the 300,000 manufacturing jobs we've lost under this Liberal government in the last 10 years and, of course, the 30,000 additional manufacturing jobs lost in the last 12 months since this Premier was coronated over 12 months ago.

Bill 165 is an Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, with respect to the minimum wage, introduced by the Minister of Labour last week. It's a bill that amends the Employment Standards Act to adjust minimum wage annually, starting in October 2015, by indexing it to the Ontario Consumer Price Index. Of course, I was clear in my opening that our caucus will be supporting this piece of legislation, tying it to inflation.

These changes to the minimum wage would be rounded to the nearest five cents and no adjustment would be made if it would result in a decrease in the minimum-wage rate. Of course we know, even though this has nothing to do with the bill, the general minimum wage is currently at \$10.25 per hour and it will be increased to \$11 per hour as of June 1 this year.

The minimum wage was last increased on March 30, 2010. Special minimum wages were also increased by the same percentage with the new changes. These categories

are a general minimum wage, students under 18, liquor services, hunting and fishing guides, and home workers.

Of course, one message I've talked about a number of times when it comes to labour legislation: I think that the Premier or the Premier's office and the Minister of Labour and his office really need to reach out to stakeholders. These are major pieces of legislation that are going to affect in one way or another the economy here in the province, and especially job creation.

The government is required to provide at least six months' notice—and that is in this bill as well—before any wage change takes effect, with a review of the current wage in place to take place every five years beginning in 2020, as well as a regulatory authority to develop different classes of employees and the respective minimum wages that apply to each class. These new special minimum wages would also be indexed.

While the adjustment is seeking to assist low-income workers, it claims to not cause undue negative impacts on business. Members of this House will know that many businesses are scrambling and will continue to do so in preparation for the minimum-wage hike to come on June 1 of this year. In fact, I know I'm hearing from certain industries, associations and businesses that they're actually scaling back on hours, and in some cases even cutting back on jobs.

Speaker, I was honoured yesterday to attend the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association trade show, which was held at Exhibition Stadium. My wife and I went there yesterday with our six-month-old daughter. These are our family days away, going to sort of political events. I got to talk with a number of people at that trade show, and it was quite a trade show, although we weren't actually able to go in because they wouldn't allow babies into their trade show. We had to hang out outside. It kind of caught us off guard.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Even Annie?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Even Annie, as the Minister of Health was asking. It's true, and I wasn't the only one with my family standing outside the doors to this trade show. For some reason, they wouldn't allow babies to go in. I think they were maybe serving samples of wine and things like that. Anyway, that's neither here nor there.

Having come from a small business background myself, and particularly as former president of the Strathroy and District Chamber of Commerce—and of course I've talked in my riding to the Grand Bend chamber, a lot of their members, and to the Wallaceburg chamber members—I'm just hearing from job creators that they are concerned, and I think some are wondering how they're going to be able to weather this change. They are telling me that costs are going up in Ontario. It's becoming a high-cost jurisdiction to do business, whether it's electricity rates or the cost of dealing with government red tape and paperwork. So I would just raise the caution with this government that they need to get a grasp on affordability of doing business here in Ontario.

Ontario's minimum wage is among the highest in Canada. In fact, I'll read an article shortly saying, I believe, that it will be the highest in the country, and those suggesting it should be significantly increased to make up for three years of freezes have failed to consider the implications that that's going to have. We know that when the Liberals announced they were going to increase the minimum wage, they made it retroactive, I believe, back to 2010.

When this government made the decision to make changes to current legislation, it appointed the Minimum Wage Advisory Panel back in July 2013 to provide advice and an approach on how to develop new legislation. This panel was to consist of an independent chair and representatives in business and labour, and anti-poverty advocates and youth. From this, it had received several recommendations. These four recommendations were as follows:

1400

"Minimum wages should be revised annually by a percentage equal to the per cent change in the Ontario Consumer Price Index."

"Minimum wages should be revised annually, and a minimum of four months' notice of any wage change should be provided." Of course, we know this was changed once the legislation was actually introduced. "The effective date of change should be April 1 of the following year," with "notification by December 1 of the previous year."

Next, the "government should undertake a full review of the minimum wage rate and the revision process every five years." These reviews are to be "conducted by a panel of stakeholders and a neutral chair."

Lastly, to "aid the full review process ... the government should establish an ongoing research program" to gather any relevant data and information and with further analysis to address policy-relevant issues on minimum wage.

Speaker, some of the concerns I have heard with any proposals to increase the minimum wage relate to, one, predictability. Employers want a process that is predictable so that they're able to plan, grow and invest for their future. That's really the key reason why the Ontario PCs are supporting this bill. It's around the predictability measure. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce, as I was saying in my opening last week, supports this as well—the predictability measure.

Secondly, transparency: We need a process that is open and easy to understand so that all businesses can operate efficiently.

Fairness: Any new legislation needs to consider the impact it will have on both its workers and employers.

Ontario's competitiveness: We need to promote this province's competitiveness. Employers are the job creators, and changes need to not discourage economic growth, job creation and long-term investment.

Speaker, I just want to read an interesting article from back in—I guess it was January 30 of this year, a column that was written in the Financial Post. It was by William

Watson. The title is "Ontario's Fact-Free Minimum Wage Policy." This is just the other side of the minimum wage argument.

"Even Ontario's own study says higher minimum wages trigger higher unemployment, which results in more poverty.

"The report of Ontario's Minimum Wage Advisory Panel that led to the Ontario government's decision Thursday to index its \$10.25 minimum wage retroactively to 2010 and add a few cents to round it up to \$11 even was actually not a bad piece of work."

Ontario is tied with Nunavut for Canada's highest minimum wage after a 75-cent hike, and I'm continuing: "Ontario's Liberal government is raising the minimum wage to \$11 an hour effective June 1, while introducing legislation to tie future increases to the rate of inflation, a key recommendation of an expert panel.

"To begin with, it didn't recommend what the government decided to do." That's important to note, I think, in this debate. "The panel's chair, ... a professor of human resources at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, chose to interpret his mandate narrowly and to examine how decisions about the minimum wage are made rather than what the level of the minimum wage should be. The panel's only recommendations were to: Index the minimum wage to the" CPI, "adjust it every April 1st (which for some reason the government decided to change to October 1st), do an overall review every five years and, as you'd expect from a panel headed by a professor, 'establish an ongoing research program for data and information gathering,' not necessarily at the Rotman School, I suppose, but doubtless paying much more than minimum wage.

"It would have been better, of course," the article goes on to say, "had the panel heeded this page and recommended doing away with the minimum wage altogether. But if you've got a minimum wage, as Ontario does, and the government is centre-left and not very imaginative (if that's not redundant), the chance of that happening is pretty much zero. So on balance, a report that says [to] index the minimum wage to the CPI and change it annually is probably the most jobs-friendly outcome possible....

"The panel report is excellent on that fundamental point, too: 'In the Canadian context, researchers have generally found an adverse employment effect of raising minimum wages especially for young workers.... More recent studies find larger adverse employment effects.... Typically those studies find that teen employment would drop by 3%-6% if the minimum wage is raised by 10%.... The adverse employment effects were substantially larger when they involved a large minimum wage increase [such as would be involved in providing four years of catch-up indexing, for instance?] compared to a cumulative series of smaller increases of the same magnitude.'"

It goes on to say, "Aha! The rationale for the minimum wage becomes clearer. It helps hasten the disappearance of low-skill jobs.

"The panel also summarized research suggesting that in addition to cutting jobs, businesses may cut the number of hours of work they offer after an increase in the minimum wage." I think that's something we all need to consider when government adjusts these types of policies. One thing I've heard, so far, during this whole debate is that employers are in some cases cutting hours, so the employee isn't going to be any further ahead.

It goes on: "That's right, an increase in poverty. The reason? Higher minimum wages trigger higher unemployment, which results in more poverty as household incomes drop among low-income families. Premier Wynne clearly missed this section of the report. Her news release Thursday pumped the new policy as part of the province's anti-poverty program.

"Given the emphasis these days on 'evidence-based policy,' especially among Liberals, it's passing strange that Ontario's Liberal government chose to disregard so much evidence collected by its own ministries for its own advisory panel.

"Unfortunately, one research area the panel did not report on concerns CPI bias. It's well understood that because consumers can respond to higher prices for one good or service by shifting their spending to others the CPI tends to overstate increases in the cost of living—maybe not by much but by some non-zero amount. Over time, therefore, indexing to the CPI will lead to real increases in the minimum wage and that may end up producing larger disemployment effects than would otherwise be expected."

"And the panel report ends with a weird final paragraph about 'a high wage strategy to maintain and foster [Ontario's] prosperity.' Never mind that nobody in the policy universe ... is recommending a low-wage strategy. The idea is to improve people's skills so their productivity rises, thus justifying the higher wage that everyone in Ontario would like to see everyone in Ontario paid. 'In such a scenario, certain types of low-skill jobs would be lost...' Aha! The rationale for the minimum wage becomes clearer. It helps hasten the disappearance of low-skill jobs. Which is a great thing for a society unless, for whatever reason, you happen to be a low-skill person. Then what do you do?"

Speaker, again, that was read word for word from the Financial Post. It was a column by William Watson. I think it is food for thought for this government when they're determining what they're doing with the minimum wage and other economic policies that could have a negative impact.

One thing I'd like to highlight: The focus for Tim Hudak and our PC caucus is to create well-paying jobs here in Ontario, to repatriate manufacturers back to Ontario, to have job creators here expand and grow, and to hire more people. That's our plan, as a party.

In fact, we've been talking a lot about our leader's plan to create one million new jobs. The bill, unfortunately, was defeated last week. The government, I think with the help of the New Democrats, defeated the Million Jobs Act. I don't know how anyone in the province of Ontario

could vote against one million new jobs. It's shameful, after what we have gone through during the last 10 years under this Liberal government.

Right now in Ontario, we have nearly a million unemployed men and women. That is why, as I said, Tim Hudak and our caucus—we've said this a number of times—agreed to clear the decks last September and pass some government bills so that the Premier and her government could table a jobs plan. We've yet to see that, Speaker.

Here we are, six months later, and we have yet to see anything that resembles a jobs plan. Instead, we hear that the Liberals and NDP want to raise taxes on businesses and middle-class families through corporate tax hikes—remember, at some point people have to pay for corporate tax hikes—and increasing the gas tax by 10 cents per litre. That's the one thing I hear about at home more than anything else. I hear a lot about the billion dollars wasted with cancelling gas plants to save a couple of seats. I hear a lot about the Ornge scandal and eHealth. But the one thing I'm hearing about now at home is the plan by the government to increase the gas tax by 10 cents. Yesterday, I believe, the average price of gas was \$1.33 or \$1.32 a litre. Could you imagine, and it would be because of Kathleen Wynne—or the Premier; I'm sorry, Speaker—and if the third party props up the government once again: People in Ontario would have been paying \$1.42 or \$1.43 a litre for gasoline yesterday. That's going to lead to killing jobs. This minimum wage increase wouldn't have made any difference to these people.

1410

Interjection.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Yes. It's increasing cross-border shopping; 10 cents a litre will only further do that. It's taking money out of the economy. Listen, this is a warning sign: It will kill even more jobs in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, this is the last thing that Ontario needs. What our province needs is a plan to create jobs and attract businesses to Ontario. Our leader, the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, has that plan. In fact, as I said, it was debated on Thursday, but unfortunately, the governing Liberals and their accomplices, the NDP, voted that down.

Interjections.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: No, it's true. I mean, the NDP and Liberals have been working hand in hand to keep this government alive.

Interjections.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Listen, this is the truth. In the last 12 months—and I opened today with this—under the Liberal-NDP arrangement, we have lost 30,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs in the province of Ontario. I'll tell you, it's their deliberate decisions, their policy decisions, that are the reason companies and businesses and employers are fleeing this province. We were the leader in Confederation.

What we need is Tim Hudak's million-jobs plan.

Interjection.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I knew the Minister of Health would be interested in this because, of course, London and southwestern Ontario have been particularly hard hit under your government.

Our five-point plan is this:

(1) It lowers hydro rates for Ontario families and employers.

(2) It lowers taxes and reins in the government overspending that has doubled Ontario's debt over the past 10 years.

(3) The Million Jobs Act promotes the skilled trades and lowers apprenticeship ratios.

(4) Tim Hudak's Million Jobs Act increases trade with provinces across Canada.

(5) It eliminates the red tape that forces small and medium-sized business owners to eliminate time filling in paperwork instead of hiring more employees.

On the fifth one, it's my understanding that the leader of the NDP was out defending Dalton McGuinty/Kathleen Wynne's College of Trades on Friday. I'll tell you, I've talked to more tradespeople—when we talk about the need to eliminate red tape, that's the first thing that needs to go. This College of Trades is nothing but a trades tax at a time when we need to be encouraging our young people to get into skilled trades. Again, we see the two parties—the governing Liberals and third party NDP—working together to really kill jobs in the province of Ontario.

Getting back to Bill 165, ultimately, any decision relating to increases in the minimum wage must take into account the impact it would have on Ontario's fragile economy. Businesses that are recovering from an economic downturn are also the ones footing the bill for these increases. A sudden drastic change would cost them jobs and potentially weaken otherwise strong sectors.

The big issue is that this bill doesn't do anything to create jobs, and when it comes to changes within the labour file, it doesn't take into account any of the much-needed changes we need to see in Ontario's labour laws, some of the things that we have been calling for here at Queen's Park. As I said, Speaker, we have a million people out of work in Ontario today. We have lost 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs in the past 10 years. Again, these changes today that we are debating in Bill 165 aren't going to do anything to change that. When the government has yet to unveil any sort of comprehensive jobs plan, I think it's very telling of where this government is going. I just feel they have run out of steam.

Of course, they are spending more time, whether it's the Pan Am scandal or the gas plants, and the police busting down the door of the Premier's office or taking hard drives out of computer systems—and of course the Ornge scandal. They're putting out fires, or trying to contain a number of fires. I think it's time that this government is replaced, because it just isn't dealing with what needs to be dealt with.

This legislation fails to address the issues affecting Ontario residents and their future long-term prosperity. Ontario workers don't want to be stuck in minimum wage

jobs. They deserve and want jobs with good wages that will allow them to support themselves and their families. I'm sure I'll come to this a little later, but the one stat—and I often forget mentioning this—that I think should be frightening to this Premier is the fact that today, in 2014, almost 10% of Ontario's total workforce is working for minimum wage. When this government got elected in 2003, 3.5% of the workforce worked for minimum wage. So we have a million people out of work today, we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs under the Liberals and an additional 30,000 with the Liberal-NDP coalition in the last 12 months, and we have 10% of the workforce working for minimum wage. Speaker, that's no way to build an economy. That's why people are wanting change here in the province of Ontario. To continue, we have to focus—the government needs to focus—on long-term economic security, focus on good, well-paying jobs that people in Ontario can depend on and raise a family with.

This change brings about concerns, as it will have the biggest direct impact on important industries such as food and consumer services, where there are a large number of minimum wage workers. The increase comes at a time when a lot of employers will be getting ready to hire a new wave of seasonal workers, and the challenge will be for them to determine whether they are able to hire at the same rate they did in previous years, with an increase in payroll costs. Again, this is something I see in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, across southwestern Ontario. There are a lot of businesses, farm-related as well, that hire seasonal workers. I've talked to a number of them that have serious concerns about this.

Businesses will also need to be prepared for additional costs beyond the new minimum wage. This is the one, I think, that often gets lost in the debate. There's going to be additional payroll taxes and costs that businesses have to bear because of higher payroll costs.

We know that minimum wage increases do little to improve the financial situation of low-income workers. In fact, there was a newspaper article in the last couple of weeks that said that Alberta, I believe, has the lowest minimum wage in all of Canada but also has the lowest poverty in all of Canada as well. We know that minimum wage increases do little to improve the financial situation of low-income workers. That's why our plan, to create one million well-paying jobs, is the direction the province needs to go.

While some small businesses understand and often support the government's efforts to reduce poverty amongst its workers, minimum wage hikes are not the most effective option. We're going to get into some stats here, but I mentioned one of them earlier. Ever since 2003, Ontario workers have faced an uphill battle under the current government. The rate of Ontario residents working in minimum wage jobs has gone from 6.3% in 2007 to 8.1% in 2009 and now, in 2014, it's almost 10%. So, as I said, in 2003, 3.5%; 2007, 6.3% of the total workforce worked for minimum wage; 2009, 8.1%; and almost 10% this year.

Speaker, that's not good for families in the province of Ontario. Under the former, previous PC government, we can boast that there were dramatic decreases in the rate of workers in minimum wage jobs: in 2000, 4.6%; in 2001, 4.1%; in 2002, 3.9%; and in 2003, 3.5%. That's a darn good record. That's why Tim Hudak needs to be the Premier of the province, to bring forward his Million Jobs Act.

1420

The facts speak for themselves, and it is evident that the current path this government has taken Ontario on has put our economy in a downward spiral. We need to change course and we need to change direction immediately. While I can appreciate that the minister is trying to boost his chances for the government in an upcoming election—well, I guess that all depends on what Deputy Premier Horwath is going to do.

I'm afraid that last week's announcement about Bill 165 and minimum wage will do very little to help those who truly need it, and it's quite surely putting our businesses, entrepreneurs and job creators into yet another state of flux due to government making decisions on the fly and without any proper consultation or communication. With Ontario being in a period of economic transition, the legislation that this government brings forward will be crucial in putting our economy back on track to prosperity. Policy choices we make now will impact our province's competitiveness for many generations to come. Speaker, our caucus and our leader were very concerned with the lack of consultation, particularly with small businesses, during the process of developing this bill and making the announcement last week.

The PCs' plan is focused on getting people more than the minimum wage. That's the big difference between Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, and the Liberals and the NDP. I think they're quite content talking about minimum wage jobs, and they're kind of fighting about who is going to create the most minimum wage jobs in the province of Ontario. Well, our plan is focused on more than minimum wage jobs. This means, specifically, paycheques for people with none at all and full-time employment for those who are settling for part-time. Again, to reiterate, because I just think it's so important, I'm really disappointed that the government and the NDP, surprisingly, would vote against Tim Hudak's plan for a million jobs. In fact, as I said, this legislation—if it had passed—would have begun the task of producing more jobs and increased take-home pay through lower taxes and less debt, and ensuring affordable energy that will help to create jobs, not eliminate them. For sure, every MPP here is hearing from constituents and job creators when it comes to the price of electricity.

We need to train more skilled workers to meet the demands in trade and help younger people find good jobs, and to increase trade with our neighbours and end the bureaucratic runaround that is inhibiting our province's job creation ability. I remember as a young child hearing politicians talk about how Ontario can trade with other countries but we have a hard time trading with our

neighbours within Canada. So I'm glad to see a focus from our leader and our caucus on promoting trade, with western Canada particularly. I think it would be a good thing for Ontario to approach the western provinces and begin negotiations to get Ontario into the western partnership that they've quite nicely set up. Ontario employers are missing out on those economic opportunities.

Ontario has the ideas, the workers and the resources to succeed. Our PC plan will create the kind of environment where job creators will be able to ensure ongoing economic competitiveness and one where businesses can work, an environment created for economic growth, not one in which additional legislation is constantly being added. That has, a lot of times, the reverse impact on businesses. We are the only ones truly committed to supporting our province's employers. This bill directly, obviously, affects employers and, as I said, some not in a positive way. Our PC plan will get our economy growing and help create jobs, and it's changes like these that people in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and all across Ontario have told me they want to see implemented. The current path this government is taking is clearly not working, and we need a new approach.

Speaker, in speaking of a new approach, I want to highlight some of the things—as I said earlier, we keep seeing the Liberals and the NDP trying to create more minimum wage jobs in the province of Ontario, and obviously that's why we are here talking about Bill 165, but we put out a plan in the summer specifically around manufacturing. Of course, manufacturing jobs are especially important where I come from in southwestern Ontario. There was a stat out—if the Minister of Health was here, she probably has heard it too—from a professor, an economist actually, at the Ivey School of Business who was saying that in the last number of years the city of London has lost 7,000 men and women between the ages of 25 and 44. A lot of that is due to the hollowing out of the manufacturing sector here in Ontario. I think that is really, really important to deal with—Ontario's manufacturing.

I hear the member from Windsor advocating that the government needs to keep running around handing out cheques to companies that hold us at ransom. I can tell you, that's no way to build an economy. In fact, it has never worked. I know the NDP think they can spend their way to prosperity, but those of us who have been in business know that businesses grow when the right economic climate is in place. Again, we need to get the economic fundamentals right. Having the right fundamentals would avoid the NDP and Liberals from supporting corporate welfare and supporting running around handing out cheques.

The Million Jobs Act was a way to level the playing field for all businesses across the province to be competitive. Again, it's lower hydro rates for Ontario families and employers; it's lower taxes; we would rein in government overspending—I know the NDP and Liberals probably don't like that; that's maybe why they voted against it. We remember—I was a page here, Speaker, in

1991, when we had the last NDP government. In fact, my group of pages delivered the first NDP budget. I know PCs remember this well. I think it was either a \$10-billion or \$13-billion deficit—I forget. It was high; it was staggering. It was 1991, in April or May, the first NDP Bob Rae government. So God help us in Ontario; we cannot afford Andrea Horwath and the NDP again.

What we need is lower taxes, and we need to rein in government overspending, which has doubled Ontario's debt over the past 10 years. If we thought Bob Rae was bad, Dalton McGuinty and Premier Wynne are actually 10 times worse than that NDP government was. We need to promote the skilled trades and lower apprenticeship ratios; we need to increase trade again, as I said, with provinces across Canada; and we need to eliminate the red tape, such as the College of Trades. I know the minister is here, and we probably have a difference of opinion there.

What I'm saying is that Ontario manufacturers require a champion who will ensure power rates are competitive, that the provincial transportation system works well, that our schools and colleges educate people for the workforce of the 21st century and that the regulations government imposes encourage competition, not deter it. Right now, we don't have those conditions in Ontario, and our towns and cities are paying the price. Since 2003, Ontario has lost—we all know—well over 300,000 manufacturing jobs. We can't afford to simply give up and pretend that Ontario can thrive without a strong, advanced manufacturing sector, because we know it can't.

There is, however, some room for optimism. Major Ontario companies like Magna are innovative market leaders, and there are a number of them. Smaller Ontario companies lead in their own sectors in areas as diverse as cranes, health care devices, liquid rubber and office floor tiles. The current government has erected a number of barriers to new jobs, including layers of unnecessary red tape and one of the highest minimum wages in the country—this was written, actually, before this last announcement, so I believe Ontario will have the highest minimum wage in Canada. Other governments have been more rational and have vigorously fought for jobs by encouraging such things as crowdfunding—we don't hear much talk about that—creating entrepreneurial visas and by developing a training wage for young employees to get the experience they need. With these three things, I'm encouraging the government to look outside the box, look to other jurisdictions and what they're doing—even in Canada. I know British Columbia has some pretty innovative things happening there to really grow that knowledge-based economy and advance manufacturing.

In the United States, we are seeing major corporations bring home production from abroad because they need highly skilled workers and because they want to produce closer to their customers. Even Chinese companies are starting to make their products in North America. We need a dedicated effort to repatriate companies back to Ontario, to seek out and to help facilitate companies to relocate and return home.

1430

Our leader has said this, and I just think it's a vivid way to look at it: We need to hang an "open for business" sign above the province of Ontario. I've only been on the job as an elected MPP for two and a half years, but I've talked to hundreds of employers now, and they're looking elsewhere, a lot of them. They're looking to northern US states. It's not so much China and India now; it's Michigan, it's Ohio, it's Indiana and places in the northern US.

The big one, of course, I think we all know, is electricity costs. We hear that time and time again. In fact, Ontario has the highest electricity costs in all of North America. Ontario has just become an expensive place to do business. I think that the government is asleep at the switch, quite frankly, whether they're putting out fires or, as I said, whether it's the eHealth scandal, Ornge, gas plants. They've taken their eye off the ball.

We know that there is great opportunity here in the province of Ontario, but we are competing directly with other provinces and US states, many of which already have the flexible labour markets, lower power rates and streamlined business regulations that we have put ideas out on. I think, especially on the affordable power issue, that's how we can get a lot of these companies to come back home, and we should.

With only 11 minutes left, I just want to go back through some of the points on this bill, Bill 165, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the minimum wage, introduced by the Minister of Labour. It's a bill that amends the Employment Standards Act to adjust minimum wage annually, starting in October 2015, by indexing it to the Ontario consumer price index. These changes to the minimum wage would be rounded to the nearest five cents, and no adjustment would be made if it resulted in a decrease in the minimum wage.

I will say thanks to the Minister of Labour. We've worked on a number of bills now that he has introduced into his team. I see some of them in the Legislature today. They've been very good at briefing the opposition critics and providing us with the information needed. I let the minister know a number of times that we will be supporting Bill 165. I forget where the NDP are at on this issue, but I'm sure we'll be hearing soon.

Interjection: They're against it, aren't they?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: If they are opposed to this, it will be the first time in two and a half years that the NDP have actually opposed anything that the Liberals have brought forward. No, we know, quite frankly, that the leader of the NDP is the Deputy Premier in Ontario now. I know that's what folks at home often tell us, especially down in southwestern Ontario, where I know the member from Sarnia-Lambton and I spend a lot of time talking to people.

I just want to close and spend a few minutes I guess just reiterating what the president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce said about the minimum wage issue. I think Allan O'Dette and his team have been

leaders. They put out a document called *Emerging Stronger*, I believe a year or two ago, and really tackled some of the big issues that governments, in particular the Ontario government, need to be focusing on—a balanced budget, lower taxes, apprenticeship ratio reform, things like this. But on the minimum wage issue, I'm just going to read verbatim what Allan has said:

"Ontario is in a period of economic transition. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce and its 60,000 members firmly believe that the policy choices made today will impact our province's competitiveness for generations to come.

"The government of Ontario is currently consulting on how to set the minimum wage. This issue is important. There is broad consensus that the current process—or lack thereof—governing the minimum wage does not work for employers and workers.

"We"—the Ontario Chamber of Commerce—"have consulted widely with our membership through surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews. Our consultations have revealed that OCC members want a process for setting the minimum wage that is based on four principles:

"Predictability: Employers want a process that provides predictability so that they can plan, grow, and invest with confidence.

"Transparency: Employers need a process that is open and depoliticized.

"Fairness: Employers also want a process that considers the impact on both employers and workers.

"Promotes Ontario's competitiveness: Employers are job creators. Decisions around minimum wage should not discourage investment, job creation, and economic growth.

"As such, we recommend that the minimum wage be pegged to the consumer price index (inflation). Of the options considered, this approach is most consistent with all four principles outlined above.

"We also urge members of the panel to consider the impacts that significant and one-off hikes in the minimum wage have on businesses and employment. For many employers—particularly those in the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors—a decision to 'make up for lost time' would exacerbate the challenges they face and hinder Ontario's economic recovery.

"We are pleased to submit our views on this matter. We look forward to participating in the continued discussion."

Of course, the minister has reviewed this as well—this submission from the OCC. While they agree with the predictability mechanism in Bill 165, they weren't in favour of the significant one-off hikes. I would relate that to the retroactivity of the minimum wage increase.

Speaker, one thing: The president of the Ontario chamber was accurate when he said that Ontario is in a period of economic transition. Losing 30,000 manufacturing jobs in the last 12 months certainly is.

To continue with the options that the OCC actually put forward:

"The OCC completed an extensive jurisdictional scan of the various processes that other provinces and countries have employed to determine their minimum wage rates. We surveyed Canadian provinces and territories as well as many international jurisdictions including Australia, European Union states, Mexico, New Zealand, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

"Our research identified the four methods most commonly used to determine the minimum wage"—and I found this very interesting, to see what other jurisdictions around the world are doing when determining what their minimum wage would be. Their research identified four methods:

"(1) The minimum wage is determined by the government on an ad-hoc basis," so that would be the status quo prior to Bill 165.

"(2) The minimum wage is determined by an independent body of experts.

"(3) The minimum wage is determined by the government on the advice of an independent body of experts.

"(4) The minimum wage is tied to an economic indicator, such as a consumer price index.

"Through our consultation process, businesses and organizations identified and debated the pros and cons of each option. Consulted members were asked to assess each option based on its potential: high, medium, low, or non-starter.

"It is worth noting that our consultations were characterized by an exceptionally high level of consensus on the merits and shortcomings of each process option."

They went on to talk about each option. They interviewed people such as Bruce Fraser from Nestlé Waters Canada. His quote in the report: "The way minimum wage is being set today does not work. It's unpredictable. Businesses cannot plan for increases. It's those unplanned changes that impact us the most."

Of course, that's exactly why we're supporting Bill 165.

Gerry Macartney, the executive director or general manager of the London Chamber of Commerce: "I can't imagine a scenario where the government would actually allow a third party to make the final decision on an issue as contentious as the minimum wage. This option just doesn't seem feasible." That was on one of the other options, Speaker.

Then we have Debbi Nicholson from the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce talking about option 3, where the minimum wage is determined by the government on the advice of an independent body of experts. Debbi Nicholson from Sudbury says, "This option has potential but it also has a lot of unknowns: who's on the panel and how are they appointed? Do they have to make decisions based on a mandated set of criteria? If so, what is that criteria and how is it determined?"

1440

So, of course, a large amount of input that the chamber heard from their members.

Option 4, again, was the minimum wage being tied to an economic indicator such as CPI. Nancy Stern from the

Marco Corp. says, "Many of my contracts have price increases attached to an adjusted CPI. It's an indicator that businesses use often and are comfortable with." I think that's generally the consensus. Businesses aren't happy with the retroactivity of the pay hike from \$10.25 to \$11 from 2010 until now, but they're satisfied with, and I think they actually like, the predictability of what's happening in Bill 165.

I think I've been clear on our party's position. We want to focus on more than minimum wage jobs. We'll allow the governing Liberals and their—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Enablers.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: —enablers—I like that one—in the NDP to continue focusing on minimum wage jobs. I don't think that builds a strong economy.

The one statistic that I think says it all: Almost 10% of today's workforce is working for minimum wage. In 2003, 3.5% of the total workforce was working for minimum wage.

In the previous 10 years, we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. In the eight years before that, Ontario had a net increase in manufacturing jobs of well over 200,000.

This relates to the Liberal policies under, of course, Dalton McGuinty, first: more debt, more expensive electricity, 300,000 more government workers. This leads to an unsustainable future for the province of Ontario, and that scares off investors.

With that, I was proud to stand on Bill 165 to talk about tying the minimum wage to the Ontario consumer price index. As always, it's good to put our concerns on the table and to debate important issues of the day, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for questions and comments, I'll remind all members that it would be preferable and in the tradition of the House if members referred to other members by their riding name or cabinet position, if they hold a cabinet position, as opposed to using their surname.

Questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'll gladly stand to represent my riding of Windsor—Tecumseh and speak for a couple of minutes on what I just heard from the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

He seems to take great delight in speaking to this government bill but spending more time talking about his party's so-called Million Jobs Act or plan that was turned down in the House last week by a majority vote.

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It was close—yes, hello.

What I find interesting is—he talked about corporate welfare. When one of the largest employers in this province is thinking about spending \$1 billion or \$2 billion on expansion and says to the governments of the day, provincially and federally, "We'd like to have a conversation with you about what you may be able to do to help us out, should we proceed in your jurisdiction in expanding our manufacturing business," instead of saying, "Yes, I'll come to the table. I'll sit down, and we'll have this conversation," the leader of the official opposition and the

labour critic from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex say, “Not involved. Not interested. Don’t want to be there. Don’t want to talk about it because it’s corporate welfare.” At the same time, he’ll rant and rave and talk about the loss of 300,000 manufacturing jobs. You’re going to lose another 25,000 or 30,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs if you don’t have a conversation with the biggest employers in the province when they want to sit down with you, maybe have a cup of coffee, and talk about what we can do together to build the economy in this province. Instead of that, you turn your back on them, you close the door on them, and you say, “We don’t want to have that conversation.”

I’ll tell you what, Speaker: We in this party do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: First of all, I’d like to echo some of the comments made by my honourable colleague from the third party from Windsor–Tecumseh.

I think there seems to be a little bit of, perhaps, disarray, or perhaps non-direction coming from the Tory party. Are they for right-to-work? Are they for right-to-work-for-less? I appreciate his grudging support of Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act.

I would, perhaps, like to cite the remarks of the former MPP for Thornhill. The Tories relied on his economic financial analysis, direction and guidance for years. Yet, very, very recently, his characterization of the Leader of the Opposition’s plan, the Hudak plan, was that it was a nightmare, something to the effect that it was—in fact, repeating essentially what I’m saying, that it was a kind of a plan without a vision, without any direction.

I’d like to just first of all apologize and take some indulgence from the newly elected MPP from Thornhill. You’re new to this Legislature, so I welcome you. You deserve a little bit of immunity and a grace period. But during the campaign itself, she essentially said, “Well, this whole issue of the minimum wage doesn’t really apply to my riding, because I don’t think really anybody in my riding works at minimum wage.” That, of course, is quite distinct from my own riding of Etobicoke North. I think, if I might, with apologies to the MPP from Thornhill, just take that as a kind of—a non-kind of concern, or maybe being slightly blasé about 500,000 in Ontario who still do work at the minimum wage. I’ll have more to say about that, Speaker—so, with due apologies to the MPP for Thornhill, and saluting the previous MPP for Thornhill and his characterization of the general Tory economic plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It’s my pleasure to follow my colleague from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. He’s been doing a great job as our labour critic. I took away from one of his comments that he was a former page here, and I think he shared with us that he delivered the first NDP budget under Bob Rae. It’s kind of sad that we’re actually still paying for that. I’m not certain we’ve ever got beyond that, and now we’ve got the McGuinty–Wynne Liberals

who have jumped on that and made us even worse than that, which we didn’t think was possible.

At first, I didn’t know, when I met Mr. McNaughton, my great colleague, whether he was a brute for punishment, coming back after an experience like that, but over time I actually believe what he’s done is—he’s a man of great courage and character for actually coming back and wanting to turn this province around so that his wonderful daughter, Annie, will have an opportunity in this province and be able to thrive and flourish in this province; she won’t have to leave.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, it’s an absolute nightmare that we’re facing under this McGuinty–Wynne Liberal government, that has the accomplice NDP stepping up and helping them every time to form budgets and then criticizing them later on. At the end of the day, you can’t support through Andrea and her colleagues and then chastise them—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Once again, I’d like to remind all members of the House, because, in fairness, I’ve heard it from all sides, and the Speaker has tried to enforce this, too—the fact is, we are asking members of the Legislature, when they’re speaking of another member in the third person, to speak in terms of their ministry name or their riding name. Everybody has maps on their desk, and they can check it out and they can determine what the riding name is, if they need it.

I’ve gone on a little too long, so I’ll give you a little extra time, member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. But again, I would ask all members to keep that in mind when they’re participating in debates and questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My sincere apologies. The member from Hamilton Centre, who happens to lead the third party, is who I was referring to. You know, they’ve been propping up—they’ve been doing this.

What we’re trying to say is that you can’t tweak around the edges. This is not something that everyday people are coming to me about every day. What they’re saying is, “I need a job. I want a job. I don’t want my son, my nephew or my grandson to have to leave this great province.”

What we’re trying to do in our party is to bring in a platform that would create a million jobs, that would lower the cost of energy, which is driving companies out of this province at an electrifying rate, you might say. We need to ensure that those people have the opportunity, that there are great skilled trades jobs out there, if we could actually get our apprenticeship ratios in perspective.

The minimum wage is going to help a very small group of people and certainly will be helpful, but at the end of the day we need to be doing much more than that to create jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again a pleasure to be able to rise in this House and make a few remarks on the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex—I'm not going to concentrate much on the Fair Minimum Wage Act itself because our member from Essex, the labour critic, is going to take that, but I'd like to make a few comments. 1450

We have often accused the Liberal Party of coming up with fancy names for small bills that were meant more for a press conference. But in this case, the Fair Minimum Wage Act basically describes what the bill is trying to do, as opposed to the Million Jobs Act.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, come on. Who wouldn't want to vote for the Million Jobs Act?

The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex remembers Bob Rae; well, I remember Mike Harris. I remember. When did we start going down the road of high hydro prices? Do you remember that? It was when we started to privatize hydro. You know who has cheaper hydro than we do? Manitoba—public hydro. Quebec—public hydro.

You know something else I remember—I was a municipal councillor—about Mike Harris? I remember when he downloaded roads to the municipalities, highways to the municipalities. That was his idea. The member said something about predictability, transparency and fairness. Those are none of the things that I remember from the Mike Harris government.

He brought forward a lot of good issues, he brought forward a lot of good points, but there were a lot of things he brought forward that were more politically driven than fact-driven.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex now has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It was a lot of fun debating Bill 165. I like the two-minute hits we get to do.

I'd like to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. Of course, he and I come from different political stripes. I disagree with the Liberals running around and handing out cheques for \$3 billion per year in corporate welfare. That's no way to build a sustainable economy.

I'd like to thank the member from Etobicoke North, my colleague and good friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and, of course, my colleague from the NDP from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

I will say, just before I close, that I do thank the NDP—I really do—for making me a Conservative. It was that experience back in 1991, in delivering that first NDP budget, whatever the heck the deficit amount was—I forget; it was at least \$12 billion or \$13 billion, as far as I can remember. I knew, from that point on, that I was a Progressive Conservative in the province of Ontario.

I'm really proud to be a Progressive Conservative in Ontario today, and it is because we have a leader who's putting forward a plan to change the course, to change the path that we're on today. Speaker, he was part of a government that created over 200,000 net new manufac-

turing jobs. We've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in the last 10 years under the former Premier and under this current Premier and, of course, 30,000 additional manufacturing jobs since the NDP–Liberal coalition came in a year ago.

Speaker, our PC plan is to create well-paying jobs in Ontario, lower hydro rates for Ontario families and businesses, lower taxes, balance the books, promote skilled trades, lower apprenticeship ratios, increase trade with other provinces within Canada and eliminate red tape such as the College of Trades.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: As always, it is an enormous honour to rise in this place to say anything, but of course to contribute to such an important debate as the minimum wage in the province of Ontario. I want to thank my colleagues who are in the House today, who are giving, certainly, some good thought and attention to the debate as we all put our ideas on the table.

It has been interesting so far, just in the last 45 minutes, to hear the PCs' non-plan on the minimum wage, such a vital component of our overall economy. They have various white papers; they have released them throughout the last two years. They are, as far as I'm concerned, a regurgitation of Conservative doctrine that we've have heard for the last 20 or 30 years. There's nothing really new there except, potentially, the ink and the paper they are written on. However, when it comes to specifically their concept or ideas around the minimum wage, and specifically around pegging it at a certain cost, they are quite interestingly mute on the subject. Nevertheless, it is interesting to hear how they would push the province, I guess, forward. As I see it, they would certainly push us backwards with regressive policies in all regards.

Nevertheless, specifically on the minimum wage, I will say from the outset that New Democrats will be supporting this bill, Bill 165, and its implementation and the mechanisms in which it will ultimately peg the rate of inflation to the consumer price index, starting October 1, 2015. However, we've gone further in our analysis of the minimum wage debate, we've gone further in our consultation around the minimum wage, and we've gone further in terms of proposing concrete policy initiatives and potentially legislation that might balance the scales when it comes to the minimum wage in the province. New Democrats have what we feel is a practical, pragmatic and reasonable plan on the minimum wage. We certainly agree that we need to increase it. It definitely needs to increase. That will be a welcome message particularly to women who find themselves in minimum wage jobs and also visible minorities, who are also more highly represented in minimum wage jobs, as well as temporary workers, migrant workers and new immigrants to Canada, who find themselves over-represented in minimum wage working conditions.

What we have said is that \$11 an hour, going forward today, is a good starting point, but subsequent increases

should be at the 50-cent mark. So New Democrats are proposing that in 2015 the minimum wage increase by 50 cents to \$11.50, and a further 50 cents on June 1, 2016, to ultimately the \$12-an-hour mark. What this does is that it's a recognition on our behalf that those workers who find themselves in minimum-wage-paying jobs are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet. Certainly we know that the argument around affordability and poverty and the income inequality that we so much find ourselves, find classes of our economies in these days—that question around income inequality cannot solely be addressed through the minimum wage. There are certainly other aspects that need to be addressed that make minimum wage an affordable wage.

Many will argue that \$12 an hour doesn't go far enough, and we've certainly heard those arguments. I want to commend those activists, many of whom are from my community and are my friends, who are pushing for a \$14 minimum wage. At this point, that's not possible. It's a massive burden that would hit our small business communities especially hard. In acknowledging our small business community, who, again, by and large are the ones who have workers that are under minimum wage regimes, we have to be cognizant of those pressures. I think about those small business owners in my community of Essex, down the main streets of Belle River in Essex and LaSalle and Amherstburg and Kingsville, and Ruthven, and St. Clair Beach, and Stoney Point and Lighthouse Cove. I think of those small business owners who are indeed themselves under constraints and finding it harder and harder to make ends meet. Many of them actually pay themselves minimum wage or even less. I have had discussions with them, and they are concerned. They want to pay a decent living wage to their employees. They want to be contributors to their local economic development and their communities. However, in this time and day in the province of Ontario, they are finding it absolutely impossible to keep their heads above water, given the considerations of high unemployment rates in our communities, high hydro rates— aspects where they absolutely can't find an economic foothold. One of them is simply the fact that people aren't spending money. People don't have that disposable income any longer because there has been such a massive exodus of good-paying jobs in our communities.

1500

In recognizing the pressures that have been put on small businesses in particular, New Democrats are offering the government some solutions to address that issue. What we have proposed is quite simply an offset for our small business community in addressing the minimum wage. If that increase—or potential increase, if the government decides to adopt it—were to happen on June 1, 2015, then the small business tax rate in the province of Ontario would drop at the same time by 0.5%. So it would go from 4.5% to 4%—an absolute acknowledgement, a balance there. And subsequently, when the minimum wage rises again the following year, you would see another half per cent.

I would also say that we are proposing that the small business tax rate be lowered today, in line with the June 1, 2014, proposal that the government is making on the \$11-an-hour mark, and that we immediately start to offer that offset to small businesses.

I've had some discussions with those members in my community, and they understand. They believe that this could be a practical and reasonable approach to, at the same time, raising the minimum wage and also acknowledging that the pressures will be on our small businesses to pay that raise.

It's interesting, because to us as New Democrats, it seems like a practical, reasonable approach, but when I listened intently to the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, who is the labour critic for the PCs, he mentioned no reprieve, no balance, no offset and no acknowledgement of small businesses in terms of their plan. He has talked about lower taxes in general, but we know, by reading their white papers, exactly what that means. It means lowering the corporate tax rate for the largest corporations in the province—the banks, the insurance companies, the pharmaceutical companies, those who are making record profits year after year, those Fortune 500 companies that are in our province; actually, the ones that they want to chase out of the province. I'll get to that, though. But they are offering absolutely no reprieve to our small business community, which bewilders me.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Now, now, now.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, there's nothing in your plan—I apologize. I've looked. I've thoroughly investigated your plan. You say nothing about small businesses in our community, which is just bewildering to me, because this is the party that is the self-proclaimed champion of all things business. That's interesting in and of itself, because I would think that they would appreciate that label, being the business-minded folks that they are.

When Chrysler corporation, the CEO of Fiat, Sergio Marchionne, acknowledged, as my colleague from Windsor-Tecumseh mentioned, that they are ready as a company—a company that has an over 30-year history in the province of Ontario as a tier 1 manufacturer. When Sergio Marchionne says, “We would like to invest up to \$3 billion in the province of Ontario. We would like to bring in advanced manufacturing, research and development, and ensure that we have good-paying jobs in our communities. The spinoff effects for a community like Windsor and Essex county and, by extension, southwestern Ontario, could be generational in their impacts,” and when Sergio Marchionne says, “We would like to discuss some of the tools that might be at our disposal through the federal and provincial taxation regime or the types of investments that might be available,” do you know what the leader of the PC Party says? He calls them extortionists. Again, one of the most respected businesspeople on the planet, someone who's brought Chrysler and Fiat to prominence in not only the product but in their manufacturing regime, and he calls them extortionists. This is the guy that we want speaking to businesses on our behalf as the Premier? I don't believe he has the

capability to actually represent this province when it comes to speaking with small business. He labels them as extortionists. He told them that they were trying to bribe our communities.

In fact, the response at the federal level—and I'll give it to our federal government. They're actually saying that potentially, we can do this. We've done it before; we can do it again.

But no. The PC leader has absolutely no ability, no recognition and no desire to at least sit down at the table and see what tools are at our disposal. What he has said is that he just simply wants to cut red tape, which means regulations, which means health and safety regulations, which means environmental regulations. He wants to get back to an era that we had under their guru, Mike Harris, where we saw a degradation of our health and safety regime and our environmental regimes and saw issues like Walkerton pop up, where we couldn't rely on the drinking water. It got that bad. Our roads and infrastructure suffered because they were, without consultation, downloaded to our municipalities. There was an enormous amount of pressure placed on our province—not to mention the sell-off of our hydro system and other regimes that could have eventually paid for themselves, had they still been within the grasp of the province.

I digress, Speaker. I half expected you to get me back on to the original focus of the bill. It is the minimum wage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You're quite correct, and yes, I look forward to hearing your comments on the minimum wage issue.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I think that's what you call self-regulation. Right? That's one of the components of the various PC platforms, and it doesn't always work. As you know, Speaker, we need someone in this House to regulate, and I certainly appreciate the role that you play.

I'm pleased to put our position on the record here and to relay to those in our small business community that we understand those pressures and we're here to actually support you in lifting the minimum wage.

Mr. Speaker, my wife is a fourth-generation business owner in Windsor. Her family has owned a car dealership for 83 or 84 years. They've been selling Chevys in Essex county for a long time.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Isn't it a Chrysler dealership?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No, it's a Chevy dealership. Good vehicles.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No. She runs it, and she will take over that dealership. I speak with her about policy and issues all the time. Certainly, the discussion around minimum wage came up most recently, as we knew that we were going to be discussing it. She said, "Of course we need to raise the minimum wage." I don't think there are too many people in her operation who don't make above the minimum wage, because it's quite an intensive operation and there are lots of skilled workers there. But she, as a small business owner, understands that it helps her business when those around her in her community

have disposable income to be able to buy a vehicle, afford a new home, afford groceries and have a little bit left over to save for retirement or their child's education. More and more, Speaker, we aren't seeing those types of jobs in this province.

The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex referred many times to the 300,000 manufacturing jobs that have been lost in this province without giving the real reasons as to why they're gone. Although I'm not an expert on why they're gone, because it's very complex, you could talk about the nature of the global economic collapse in 2008 that put enormous pressures on all jurisdictions in the province and the fact that that was actually born out of a deregulated banking sector and home sector—again, another Conservative mantra, where they don't think any rules should apply and free market economics should reign without any checks and balances. I would say there are various complex reasons why 300,000 manufacturing jobs have left.

As the son of an auto worker—my mother worked for GM for 35 years, at the GM trim plant. I watched, sadly, when that plant got torn down a couple of years ago. I certainly watched as those jobs in that plant left for cheap-wage jurisdictions and ultimately left for Mexico. That certainly has been the story of manufacturing post-free trade, post the original free trade agreement between Canada and the United States signed under Brian Mulroney and then the North America Free Trade Agreement signed under Jean Chrétien, who actually won an election by saying he wasn't going to ratify NAFTA but then went ahead and did it. So we know the Liberals' record on selling out and hollowing out our manufacturing base.

The North American Free Trade Agreement has been one of the most detrimental aspects of our manufacturing base that there has ever been. Any metrics that you want to examine or study can show you that there are pressures from tier 1 suppliers on our tier 2 suppliers to actually have a low-cost jurisdiction built into their business plan, and that then forces those tier 2 suppliers to find cheap labour sources in Ciudad Juárez in Mexico—it's the murder capital of the planet—where their social infrastructure certainly is not anywhere near what we have put in to build a civil and cohesive society in Canada.

1510

If the plan, I guess, under the PCs is to bring us closer in line with what they have in Mexico, where the average worker in a tier-1 plant makes \$7 an hour and the average worker in an automobile plant in Essex county, or in Ontario, makes about \$38 an hour—if they want to bring us down to that level, then the economics on that don't work at all. But I don't hear them arguing against bringing us down to that level. In fact, I hear that as a major plank, explicitly expressed by the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, where he said we need deeper trade—

Mr. Steve Clark: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just think the member for Essex needs some clarification. Our critic indicated that we were supporting this bill, so I

think it's very important, given some of his previous comments, that we should reiterate that fact.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay. It's not a point of order, but interesting information. I return to the member for Essex. Again I would remind all members of the House that—I would ask them to speak to the bill, to speak to the legislation we are debating, which is the minimum wage legislation.

The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, the critic for the PC caucus identified that one of the components to their plan on addressing the wage gap is to integrate deeper in trade relationships. I'm simply expressing what has historically happened and what have been the results of deeper trade integration with other jurisdictions that don't have the same social capacity or social outlook as we do, or have not invested so much. So, we can go backwards or we can go forwards.

Certainly, as New Democrats, we've always proposed that we go forwards. That's evident in some of our most foundational policy initiatives. I would simply say that, you know, the universality of health care was born out of the CCF under Tommy Douglas. It's something that Canadians feel as though it is our crowning achievement. It is a strategic asset. It makes us who we are, in the sense that we decide to invest in each other. We decide to acknowledge that we each have something to contribute and that, at the very least, we should ensure that if your health degrades to any capacity, we should be there for you, to lift you up. That's a principle, again, that I think is lost on the Conservative mindset, but one that not only makes social sense but makes economic sense. It's one of the reasons why you have tier 1 suppliers and auto manufacturers that have set up in Ontario and Canada, because they know that the cost of their health care is actually affordable. It's actually a cost benefit to them when they do their analysis.

So, yes, our wages might seem higher on paper, but actually, when you take in the benefits, the fact that we invest in good infrastructure, the fact that we invest in modern transportation and the fact that we acknowledge that our regulatory regime is actually quite streamlined, it makes us look, certainly, appealing—and it has been.

There are certain aspects that have led to good-paying jobs leaving our country and our jurisdiction. I've talked about, definitely, the trade agreements that almost force corporations to take that initiative. I don't know if they really wanted to, but they actually have to. What's interesting, though, is that there are other jurisdictions that have implemented some of the policies that have been bantered around today in terms of raising the wage—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Bandied about? Yes. One just happened recently in South Carolina: Volkswagen. Volkswagen decided that, for any new potential investment, they're going to want some structure. They're going to want a partner at the table, and they're actually demanding that that plant infuse some unionization into the

structure. They need a partner at the table on the labour side. It's interesting that we're hearing the absolute opposite of that argument coming from the PCs.

There are pressures on employers and employees that make any wage a difficult wage. It doesn't matter whether you're making minimum wage or whether you are making \$50,000 an hour or a good—actually, the wage that we all make in this place, which is quite a substantial wage. There are pressures put upon our labour that are outside of our control, and it's incumbent upon us, as members of this Legislature, to do absolutely everything that we can to make each dollar stretch as far as we can. And that certainly makes sense when we talk about industrial hydro rates, but it makes sense when we talk about consumer rates as well.

We have seen a hybrid, a bastardization of our electricity system, whether it be distribution or production, in this province, to the effect that it is so fragmented that even Ontario Hydro has not been able to get a grasp on their billing, and we're seeing massive discrepancies for people who are getting bills in excess of \$1,000 a month.

We need to examine and do everything that we can to streamline that regulatory regime, to put the proper oversight into place, so that we can start to make sure that people can gain a foothold and that we can ensure that \$11 an hour or \$12 an hour or \$14 an hour allows people to live a good, decent-quality life. Unfortunately, at this very moment, I think the pressures on everyday people are getting harder and harder, and we have a government that is not cognizant of those pressures.

In terms of our relationship or where we will be at an \$11 minimum wage—I believe it will bring us to the highest minimum wage in Confederation. I think it was mentioned that Alberta has the lowest minimum wage. I was speaking to my colleague the member from Hamilton Mountain, whose daughter is out in Alberta right now. She just moved to—

Miss Monique Taylor: Grande Prairie.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Grande Prairie, where she has said, texting her mom, that there are jobs everywhere—

Miss Monique Taylor: Some \$18 to \$20 an hour.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Some \$18 to \$20 an hour. So there are employment opportunities in Alberta; there's no question about that. It is booming, due to unmitigated expansion of the Athabasca tar sands. We know that. But there is a causal effect on our economy in Ontario, and that has to be recognized.

When we are pegging our dollar, our dollar is pegged at, typically, oil prices, and the massive expansion of exports in oil has raised the value of our dollar, artificially inflated the value of our dollar. That immediately makes all of our manufacturing exports twice as expensive as they normally would be. So when we're talking about the good old days in the early 1990s and the late 1990s in terms of manufacturing in the province of Ontario, let's also remember where the dollar was at. It was at around 68 cents, 73 cents at a high. Let's also remember where the price of gas was at that time: It wasn't even at \$1. So the costs for the inputs on businesses, especially in the

manufacturing sector, were half as much as they are today, and that unmitigated expansion of our resource economy at the expense of our manufacturing economy is a direct contributor to the loss of good-paying manufacturing jobs.

And nobody's done anything about it. In fact, when they talk about good-paying manufacturing jobs, they don't acknowledge that simple fact that we've all had the misfortune to observe. How do we do that? How do we fix that issue? It's certainly one that requires us to dialogue with members of our community and to speak with small businesses, large businesses, and put our minds together to at least acknowledge that we shouldn't be pitting one resource or one industry against another. They should be working symbiotically, and no one, to this point, whether in the federal government or provincial government, has actually gotten a hold on that. It's a real abdication of our responsibility and priorities, at least in this province, to not make mention of it or to not make an effort to remedy that.

Again, this is a debate that I think happens probably every time any jurisdiction talks about addressing that minimum wage. There's a funny quote from an American comedian.

1520

Interjection: Jon Stewart?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No, it's not Jon Stewart. You know, I forget his name. But he says, when talking about the minimum wage, "You know, why do we have a minimum wage? Because if they allowed you to pay me any less, you would." You know, people would pay less than they absolutely had to. There's no question. It's a grown-up debate that we always have to have in here. It's one that requires us to be clear and true about our ideals; it's one that is not without its contentious aspects, and it's certainly one that we welcome having with all stakeholders. That's why you see us being really reflective and thoughtful about the nature of the minimum wage going forward in that, yes, we acknowledge it has to rise, and pegging it eventually at the rate of inflation or the consumer price index will be a good metric to allow some stability for small businesses to be able to plan ahead. Also, informing them four months ahead of time as to what that increase will be is another practical, prudent component to this overall bill.

But we have to acknowledge that there are going to be some pressures on small businesses to pay the increased minimum wage. That will mean that the government will have to re-evaluate its priorities. New Democrats have also identified some other ways that this government could save a little bit of money. We've said this many times, to no large effect on the government, and certainly the opposition—they don't seem to be able to absorb this rationale. At the same time as addressing the cost of the minimum wage and the rise in the minimum-wage rate, New Democrats are calling for an immediate public sector CEO salary freeze and bonus freeze. That means that we—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: We asked for it too.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No. See, here's the thing, and I will acknowledge the interjections by my colleague from Quinte—Northumberland-Quinte West. My goodness, he leaves the third floor and I forget his riding, even.

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: See, here's the difference: When we're talking about priorities as a province, the Conservatives would like to pin all our hopes and fortunes—actually what they're saying is that they're pinning all the problems, all of our economic woes on public sector workers, the teachers, the cops, the ambulance drivers, the paramedics that were in this building on Thursday asking for post-traumatic stress acknowledgement through the WSIB. To their credit, they are going to support it, but those are the people that they want to freeze wages on. We're saying, "You know what? They're a vital component to our overall economy." The health of our public sector is actually something that got us through the economic collapse of 2008, because there were some good-paying jobs that actually couldn't be outsourced to the lowest-wage jurisdictions on the planet, and they are our teachers, our cops and our municipal workers, people who actually have binding collective agreements that have benefits and insurance. Those are good-paying jobs. That's what we qualify as good-paying jobs.

What we're saying is that we need to maintain them. We need to negotiate and keep the frameworks of negotiation open so that we're getting good value for our dollar in our public sector. We certainly know that. But when it comes to CEO salaries, folks are getting rich as CEOs of crown corporations in this province, and that just doesn't mesh with the reality of everyday Ontarians. So we try to impress upon the government and the opposition that, if you're going to start somewhere in the public sector, start at the top. They say, "Whoa, no. We can't start at the top, because we are the top. We are the 1%. We've got to protect our buddies at the top."

It's trickle-down economics. It's a fundamental mantra, in principle, of capitalism and the right-wing ideology. It doesn't work. Speaker, because the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. What we're saying is, let's start at the top. Maybe those CEOs could survive on twice the rate of the Premier's salary, which roughly would come out to about \$444,000 a year, somewhere around there. If you can't survive on \$445,000 a year, we've got bigger problems. I would say that that would be a good area for us to start.

Secondly, again, something we don't hear about—definitely from the Conservatives, and there has been mild response from the government—is the closure of new corporate tax loopholes that will be worth about \$1.1 billion annually. New Democrats and our leader, Andrea Horwath, have called on the government, and the Premier specifically, to put a stop to proposed and planned new corporate tax loopholes that will see the luxury boxes at Maple Leaf Gardens—not Maple Leaf Gardens, rather—

Mr. Michael Prue: SkyDome.

Mr. Taras Natyshak:—SkyDome or anywhere else, any other sporting venue, be able to be a write-off for corporate Ontario and corporate Canada, where lavish expenses would be seen as a normal, everyday business operation here for our friends in the 1%. We're saying, "You know what? Times are all right for those guys. Actually, margins are not too bad, and the TSE has had some record highs. Let's put a freeze on that." Let's say there are different priorities where, on an annual basis, we could put \$1.1 billion back into infrastructure, for instance. Maybe we could put \$1.1 billion into public transportation. Maybe we could put half a billion dollars into our health care, our front-line workers in long-term care.

But there's more, Mr. Speaker. What we're also seeing is that, in 2010, the Auditor General, in his findings, indicated that this provincial government had left over \$2.4 billion in corporate taxes that are owing to us, owing to the province in corporate taxes alone—they left \$2.4 billion in corporate taxes uncollected. So we've got a \$13.3-billion budgetary deficit—around there, roughly—and we've got \$2.4 billion out on the table still. We left \$2.4 billion on the table. We don't hear the Leader of the Opposition ever talk about the fact that they're just recovering the money that's owed to us. We talk about prompt payment in the infrastructure sector and contract-sector; let's get some prompt payment from those who owe us taxes.

At the same time, Speaker, get the irony of this: They were laying off tax enforcement agents. At least they gave themselves an excuse to not be able to collect that \$2.4 billion because, unfortunately, in times of austerity we have to lay off the tax collectors. They are an unfortunate victim of the austerity measures of the days of Dalton McGuinty and Dwight Duncan.

Speaker, there are lots of ways that we've identified for us to be able to prioritize the needs of small business—and to be able to pay for them as well, because that's important. People in the public want to know not only what your concepts are, what your ideas are, but they want to know how we're going to pay for it. So when we say that we will be offsetting the minimum wage and offsetting it by reducing corporate taxes or small business taxes by 0.5%, we're also saying that these are other initiatives that we've identified to pay for that plan.

It's prudent, it's practical and it's pragmatic. It's the P3s that New Democrats believe in, not public-private partnerships—prudent, practical, pragmatic. And I think it's where, by and large, members of our province want us to go: something reasonable, something that makes sense, something that acknowledges that we have issues that we have to address, but something that also acknowledges that there are challenges on the other end that we have to balance out. We've taken that approach to a whole host of issues.

Again, I can't help but think about the argument proposed by members of the official opposition in that they have this one-million-jobs plan—a million jobs; imagine

that. It sounds like a late-night infomercial. It sounds like when you wake up and open your eyes, you turn on the TV at about one in the morning and then, oh, my God, you see one million jobs. It's almost as if, if you buy it right now, he's going to throw in an extra set of steak knives. You think, "This can't be true. How can this be true?" You're saying there has been a plan all along, that they've got a one-million-jobs plan in their back pocket and all you've got to do is vote for Tim Hudak? To me, that's not practical. People don't buy into that—well, some people do; a very small minority. And do you know what they find out? The steak knives don't work too well; you can barely cut through an orange. The whole thing was just a little bit of a ruse.

1530

These are things that people, I think, are tired of. I think it adds to the cynicism that the general public feels in regards to politics in general. They see unaffordable plans or unaccountable plans, or they see people saying anything, really, to get elected, or saying anything to gain a headline. What they really want to see is something that is reasonable, something that makes sense to them. And my goodness, if our proposals to the government don't seem reasonable and balanced, then I don't know how much further we could go, because it certainly, I think, will make life easier for them in implementing an \$11-an-hour minimum wage plan. It will make life easier for our small business community, who are the economic generators of jobs in our province. And we believe wholeheartedly as New Democrats that it will make life better for more people in the province of Ontario.

So, Speaker, with that, I give my endorsement to the initial steps of this bill in that it will only prescribe us pegging the minimum wage to the CPI. But I urge the government to adopt our ideas in going further.

Did I talk about the one-million-jobs thing yet? Maybe I should go back to that. It's an interesting topic, a million jobs. Speaker, one of the components—the million jobs plan was released a couple of different months ago and through a different—

Interjection: A couple of segments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Segments. Thank you. Merci, monsieur.

Peut-être je peux le dire en français. Il y avait un autre aspect au plan pour un million d'emplois—un million.

It sounds unbelievable even in French. It doesn't matter which language; it's bilingually unbelievable. And they asked us why we voted against it. Well, why wasn't it two million or three million or a billion jobs? Pick a number out of the air—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Mr. Speaker, I just wonder if you would maybe redirect the honourable member from Essex—we're wondering whether he's talking about our bill from last week, the Million Jobs Act, or whether he's actually talking about the Fair Minimum Wage Act. So if we could just clarify that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Well, I think the members know that we're supposed to be talking about Bill 165 today, and I would ask all members of the House to bring their remarks back to the topic at hand and the bill that's being debated, Bill 165, the minimum wage legislation.

I return to the member for Essex, who has the floor.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his intervention. You know you've hit a nerve when they don't even want you to talk about their plan. I wonder how many of those million jobs actually are eventually minimum wage jobs, because they don't talk about a plan to help workers fight for their rights, to help them increase their working conditions. They don't talk about affordable housing attached to the need for good-paying jobs. They don't talk about affordable child care. They don't even talk about our health care. These are all components to making any job more value-added. It's interesting, Speaker. They don't want me to talk about their plan. I guess I will stay away from it, because any more time spent on it, I guess, is a waste of time.

Speaker, I believe I've quite clearly presented our party's position on the minimum wage. I know that it was met with great anticipation on behalf of the members of the Liberal caucus, because they kept asking us for months and months, "Where's your plan on minimum wage? Where's your plan on minimum wage?" Well, now that we have appeased them—because we always need to help them out with their ideas; they seem to subscribe to the vast majority of them, anyhow, to make up the bulk of their legislative initiatives—they now are asking us what our plan is on health care and home care and child care and infrastructure and public housing and public transportation and the environment. They want our ideas; they need our ideas, and we certainly are ready to give them in little digestible bits, because we don't want to overwhelm them.

Specifically, on the minimum wage: It's very practical, very pragmatic, very doable and balanced. I think it will be a welcome reflection of the concerns of our small business community and the need to address the income inequality gap that we find in our country. It's something that New Democrats put a lot of thought into, a lot of consultation, and one that has been met, by and large, with good acknowledgement from all sides that it's the way forward in this province; something that could spark a little bit of a renaissance throughout the rest of the provinces, in that we acknowledge.

Folks in Essex feel okay about it. They certainly want us to address the issue of high hydro rates. They need us to address the issues of unaccountable government and priorities in terms of the spending, where this government puts its priorities, because they want to see their communities benefiting and their neighbours benefiting and not solely those who are closely associated with any particular party. They want to see a balanced approach,

and here's one real, basic aspect where we can start to do that.

Speaker, that will end my comments in this wonderful debate. I look forward to the interjections and commentary from my colleagues. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member from Essex did present the NDP case in support of the \$11 minimum wage increase that the Liberal government brought in. As he stated, it's now the highest in Confederation, and I do point out that that's a problem.

The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association testified before finance and they indicated, "The horticulture sector is still struggling to absorb the last minimum wage increase to \$10.25 an hour."

The Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers came before finance—another major employer, not only in Essex but in Haldimand-Norfolk—and indicated that their profitability is very sensitive to changes in the minimum wage, since they compete against jurisdictions with much lower wages, and describe it as an ill-advised way to deal with poverty.

OFA, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, indicated before finance, "Jumps in minimum wage reduce seasonal and youth employment...."

These organizations seem to have consensus. They do lean towards any future increases to the consumer price index, if we take into consideration the general health of business at that time, but they certainly did not want to see this \$11 increase that we got from the Liberals. They didn't want to see an \$11 hike and then negotiations around linking it to CPI.

I also give these organizations credit. They put forward an idea that perhaps it is time, in the province of Ontario, to have a separate job category, a separate agricultural manual labourer category, for issues around government setting wages.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, it's always a pleasure to provide my commentary when my colleague from Essex speaks. He always speaks with great passion and conviction and belief in our responsibility to stand up for the people of Ontario, to improve their condition in whatever way we can. I like the way he framed the support that we have. We think this is a good initial step but it can go further, and the member from Essex has laid out our plan.

1540

What's really surprising is that the government is supposed to propose ideas and plans, and as the opposition, historically, we then, in response to their plans, provide our input. But it's very troubling and concerning when the government, which is supposed to lead, says, "We need to hear your plans. We need to hear your ideas." It's troubling that they need that, because, ideally, the government should propose their plan, should propose what

they have to do, and then we can provide our input. The fact that they needed it, that they were struggling to exist without the response from the NDP, was, to me, somewhat troubling. I think it lacks genuinity, because if you genuinely want to hear someone's ideas, you don't propose that you need them and that you can't move forward and you attack a party because they're not giving you any ideas. That does not seem to me to be a genuine request for ideas. That's a ploy to somehow undermine a party. So anyway, I question that in terms of a genuine response.

But what I am presenting and what I do encourage the party to do now is to look at going a step further and tying in reductions to small business taxes and an increase to the minimum wage, because we know that people are struggling in this province. We know that people are having a hard time making ends meet, and we need to do whatever we can to make sure we uplift them out of poverty.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for—Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Mr. Speaker, I would have thought that by now you would have had that one memorized.

This is a bill on which all of the parties agree. It's time to review the minimum wage, and I think in the end we're all going to support this move to move the minimum wage to \$11 an hour. It's worth noting that when the government took office some 10 years ago, minimum wage had been frozen for eight very long years at \$6.85 an hour. After having taken office, the government had a staged, responsible means of moving minimum wage up by a small increment each year, enough to bring minimum wage up to where it's competitive. Most importantly, after gaining \$10.25 an hour in 2010, the introduction of the harmonized sales tax immediately provided a sales tax credit, mostly to low-income people. The following year, it was the child tax credit and then the energy and property tax credit, and now it's time to go back to that base minimum wage and bring the minimum wage up again.

Among the things this government has done over the past decade is to find ways to ensure that if someone of moderate means or someone who's earning the minimum wage spends money, we have every opportunity to rebate the costs of living in the form of tax credits, such as sales tax and energy and property tax. I think these things are responsible, and the move to an \$11 minimum wage is just one step on that continuing journey to ensure that people of low or moderate incomes have a chance to live a life with dignity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It was good, I guess, to endure the talk from the member from Essex when he talked about discrediting the possibility of a million jobs. We don't have to go back very long in history—just, actually, the government before this government was placed—to when we created over a million jobs under the previous Mike Harris government. So I think it's important to

know that those are realities. I think it's something we have to get back to to get our people back working.

We are sitting now at a minimum wage that's the highest in the country, and again, it's just another expense a business has that's the highest in the country. We're not disagreeing that we should be indexing and getting it out of political hands, but you look at that and you add small business or big business—I mean, this government has the habit of taking big business and making it small.

You're looking at the highest energy rates, the highest property taxes, which are a result of the charges that have been put down to municipalities, and the highest payroll taxes, and they still expect that, at the end of the day, businesses will want to come here. If you're an entrepreneur or you're a big company that's trying to review where you're going to build your next car, would you come to Ontario? Actually, we've seen our province go from the number-one vehicle-producing jurisdiction in this continent—now we're number three. We're behind Mexico, and we're behind Michigan. This is something that's increasing in rate, so we'll soon be further down the totem pole than that.

I think that what we need to do is look at, what are we going to have to do to get good-paying jobs? We're talking minimum wage jobs here, because this government has doubled the number of people on minimum wage, and our goal should be good-paying jobs, making the economy so we have people who are making higher and making enough wages to make a good living—

Interjection.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: So, thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We return to the member for Essex for his reply.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thanks to the members for Haldimand—Norfolk, Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Mississauga—Streetsville and Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

It's interesting, as always, to hear, again, the rebuttal to what I believe is a practical, pragmatic plan, something that has a balanced approach. It's interesting to hear the Conservatives not acknowledge that built into our plan would be some reprieve and an equalizer, a little bit of a benefit for our small business community.

Again, these are supposedly the champions of all things business, the purveyors of all capital transactions in the province, or in the world, and they don't seem to think that it's important for us to support our small businesses in the province, whereas here in New Democratic territory, we are seeing that the pressures put on our small businesses today and moving forward are ones that we have to be cognizant of, and actually use our ability to provide some relief there.

So there's a mechanism that we're proposing to the government—we hope they adopt it—that would see the small business tax rate decrease at the same rate that the minimum wage increases. It's balanced; it's affordable, given that the government restructures their priorities. It is fair. It's something that resonates in my communities.

But, lo and behold, the Conservatives want to talk about, again, giving the 1% the biggest breaks in the province. Well, let's give the small mom-and-pop shops in our communities a little bit of a break as well. We can do that. We have the ability to do that in this bill. But they seem focused on bringing in right-to-work legislation similar to what they have in Wisconsin, Alabama, Tennessee and Michigan, where we've seen a massive exodus of good-paying jobs. They have absolutely no plan to address the need for good-paying jobs. They don't even know what good-paying jobs are, unless you're the CEO of a bank or an insurance company.

We're talking about real people in real communities, on the main streets, not in the boardrooms. This is a bill that will support them, and we're certainly ready to influence it.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014 / Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2014.

FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 POUR UN SALAIRE MINIMUM ÉQUITABLE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker, for the recognition in support of Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act. I will, of course, salute my colleague from the NDP, the MPP for Essex, for his remarks and his, really, passion on this subject of minimum wage for Ontario workers.

I think it's important for us to put on the table that we have wholehearted support from the NDP on this particular bill. We even have somewhat, perhaps extracted with some difficulty—sort of like a bit of a dental appointment, but still—support from the PC side on this Fair Minimum Wage Act.

My colleague from Essex remarked, why were the Liberals demanding their position on the minimum wage for so long? Well, I have to just, with respect, cite for you—because for months, you didn't have one. You were stickhandling whether you would be more champions of the working class and perhaps people with more modest incomes, or perhaps rechristen yourselves as the party of small business.

Let's hear, for example, what the Toronto Star actually had to say. In fact, I sent a nice complimentary email to Martin Regg Cohn, who wrote, "When did the party of the working poor lose its voice? Listen to the sound of Horwath clearing her throat when she finally emerged from the NDP's witness protection program"—to finally come forthrightly out in support of minimum wage. I call to your attention, Speaker, that the NDP's 2011 campaign called for a minimum wage of \$11.20. We are now not only raising it to \$11 currently but also, as you know very well, having a built-in issue for inflation, essentially tying it, pegging it, to the consumer price index.

1550

I would, Speaker, first of all, with your permission, like to cite the esteemed remarks of the former MPP for Thornhill, the honourable Peter Shurman, who served as finance critic for the PC Party from October 26, 2011, to September 8, 2013. He very recently, having first of all been the spearhead, the leader—let's put it, the brain trust—behind the Tory economic vision, once he retired from this place, when the shackles of the evil whips were removed from him, said that the Tory plan was a nightmare, that it was a plan without a vision. Unfortunately, I have to say that I don't see too many of the remarks coming from the Tory side today that really make me want to change that particular viewpoint.

Again, when I'm explaining to my kids or to classes what some of the differences are, say, between the Tory mindset and the Liberal mindset—even though we're not supposed to talk about the Million Jobs Act or their previous plan, from which they just climbed down, the right-to-work-for-less program—I have to say that, ultimately, it looks like what they're trying to do is Americanize Ontario. They are trying to create the United States of Ontario.

Whether you're looking at minimum wage or layoffs, sell-offs, liquidate our assets, cut, slash, burn, deregulate, weaken the tax structure, weaken environmental laws—ultimately, what all of this is about is called arbitrage, which, Speaker, as you may recall, originally meant, you buy gold at a certain value in Paris and you sell it at a higher value in London. That's called arbitrage. That's kind of the original meaning of it. But what's going on now, in the corporate world and, I guess, in the boardrooms, is an arbitrage of tax structure, environmental laws, minimum wage laws—basically what seems to be a characterization of what's going on with the Tory side on the whole issue of union-busting.

If you look at the political-industrial complex and the history attached thereof—whether it's from the early combines and cartels of the Rockefellers all the way to this day—union-busting, the diminishment of union laws, has been part and parcel of that attempt for a very, very long time. I have to say, with respect, that the PC side is really just yet another manifestation of an echo of it. Whether we're talking about minimum wage, whether we're talking about corporate taxes or this "cut the deficit at all costs," whether it's firing nurses or laying off health care workers, closing hospitals and so on—I have to say

with respect to my honourable colleagues, who continue to shout—

Interjections.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: By the way I might just say, if Valium is required, I am licensed to prescribe it. Having said that, I will just continue, Speaker.

We are a country, not a corporation. We are citizens, not merely taxpayers. This issue, this attempt of divide-and-conquer, us and them, this Tea Party Republicanization, privatizing the gains and socializing the losses, this hard right turn, this scorched-earth policy, the Newt Gingrichization of Ontario is not something that I want.

For example, when the Million Jobs Act was proposed just recently in the House, again with reference to the minimum wage, I said to the honourable Leader of the Opposition that I would invite him to have a look at the book and the documentary that has just most recently been made about Mitt Romney. If he actually listens to the documentary, some of the speeches that they've collated, you will see a remarkable—and I would say, by the way, perhaps embarrassing—concordance between the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition and the expired remarks of Mitt Romney. Again, whether we're talking about the minimum wage, about union-busting, about this sloganeering Million Jobs Act, the kind of dismantling of the superstructure that has built Ontario and made it what it is, whether it's health care or education or our universities, this is really, I would say, the PC outlook, essentially looking at everyone as merely a taxpayer or a ratepayer and not as a citizen, part of a country and not merely a corporation.

I have to say as well, in closing, that of course the increase to the minimum wage with the built-in inflation protection is something that for my own constituents in the great riding of Etobicoke North—which, yes, has its share of modest-income folk, whether it's young women or single moms or new immigrants, transitory workers and so on—will be much-welcomed news.

For that reason, I would first of all do a shout-out to the former MPP from Thornhill, Peter Shurman, for his remarks calling the Tory plan a “nightmare”—I think perhaps we might even invite him to run for us next time in Niagara Falls, where I understand he's now set up shop—and simply say that this is a much-needed initiative for the province of Ontario.

By the way, just to make it clear to all the folks who are listening, I'd just ask my colleagues in the House, could you remind me, during the eight lost years of the Harris-Eves Tory reign, the reign of error, as it were, how many times in those dark days, along with the riot police showing up to the steps of Queen's Park, was minimum wage raised? Does anyone recall? Was it three, two, one? No, Speaker. It was zero, and that shows you in a very small, little factoid the mindset, the outlook. God help us should they ever get the reins of power. That's what the Tory mentality is all about. And as I say, the offer of prescriptions of mild, medium or severe characteristics is available to you at any time.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's interesting to hear the member from Etobicoke North. I heard him mention not about this bill, but about union-busting. But what they're doing is so effective—they are killing the jobs—there is no need for unions because they are going somewhere else.

Our party and certainly our history have been about creating good jobs. Many, if not most, of them are unionized. People today are not worried about whether they're in a union or not. They are worried about whether their job is going to be here tomorrow. We have to see some changes here if we're going to expect that somebody in this province can actually start a business and turn a profit so that they can pay somebody other than minimum wage.

We're arguing here about making sure people make an adequate minimum wage. We've heard a lot of experts. Actually, the panel came back and did not recommend this \$11 an hour. This is something that this government did. The panel did not recommend that we should have the highest rates in North America, or in Canada. But, you know, when you slip out in North America—because that's the problem: We're the highest of all of our neighbours, and you can't have the highest of everything and expect people are going to want to come and start a business here.

It's embarrassing. We'll be sitting here, and we've already slipped from first to number three in the number of cars built in this province. As far as I know, those are good unionized jobs, and all we've seen is these jobs disappear by the scores or the hundreds. Heinz: good unionized jobs, gone. Caterpillar: good unionized jobs, gone.

This is not a matter of union-busting, but actually, when you look at their effect, it is union-busting, because they are getting rid of good unionized jobs. Hopefully, this government is smart enough to see what's happening and try to reverse the trend, but until some of these 20- or 30-some panels start to reply back—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thirty-seven panels.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Until those 37 panels start to tell them, “Wake up, folks,” there will be nobody left here: nobody to pay the jobs of the public servants that we're trying to contain. It's all a system that has to be looked at. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I must admit my colleague from the Liberal Party gave a great speech. It was actually quite enjoyable, and I thank you for that, but I have a couple of assertions that I'd like to make.

I appreciate that the member indicated that in 2011—that's maybe three years ago—the NDP was leading and led on this issue, and thank you very much for following us. I appreciate that. We spoke about the minimum wage for years. We were the champions of this issue and we don't have anything to prove on this; we have nothing to prove on this.

1600

In addition, we have for years championed the idea of increasing minimum wage in relation to inflation. That's another NDP idea. So thank you very much for implementing our idea. That's a great sign of leadership, when you are able to take great ideas from across the floor. Thank you for doing so.

The other issue I want to raise, though, is that the government seems to be a little bit insecure. If the government is so concerned about what the third party is saying on a position, if they're so preoccupied with that, to me, it speaks to their own insecurity. I implore you, you need to look inside yourself and build your own confidence, and not resort to attacks based on insecurity. It belittles your position. It belittles your stature. You should do more than that. I expect more than that from the government and the people of this province expect more than that. I implore you to search deeper within yourself for some confidence.

But we ask you to look at our proposal very seriously. We know that in this province people are struggling and that the minimum wage is still keeping people in poverty, and we need to uplift them. So we ask you to consider our increase and tying it into a small business tax decrease.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for his comments. Contained with his comments were a couple points that I'll just address that I think are irrefutable. Number one is that from 1995 to 2003, under the Conservative government, the minimum wage did not go up. It was at \$6.85 when they were elected, and when we came into government as the Liberals in 2003, it was still at \$6.85. It hadn't moved. In response to the comments that were just made and the suggestion that there was leadership there, this is not our first move on minimum wage. We took it from \$6.85 to \$10.25, a 50% increase before this last move. So we've been active on the minimum wage file for quite some time.

Now, the Conservatives may have their own reasons for why they didn't move it. I'm not sure what they are, but as mentioned by the member from Etobicoke North, that is absolutely irrefutable. It was \$6.85 and eight years later it was still there.

With regard to the comments from the member from Essex—I just heard the last 10 minutes or so when I came into the House—about us asking for a position from the NDP on minimum wage, well, of course we would expect that a party that likes to portray itself as the social conscience of the province would have a position on the minimum wage. I predicted in caucus two or three weeks ago that whatever we say, Andrea Horwath and the NDP will come out and say something a little bit more. She didn't have a policy because she didn't want to have one. She was just going to wait to see what the Liberals said. We said 11 bucks an hour; Andrea Horwath comes out and says \$12 an hour. If we had said \$12 an hour, Andrea Horwath would have said \$13 an hour. If

we had said \$13 an hour, Andrea Horwath would have said \$14 an hour—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I've raised this several times this afternoon and asked members, when they're talking about other members of the House—you know what I'm talking about—to refer to other members by their riding name or their title in some way and not to personalize it. So I would ask all members to remember that. I think this is the fourth time I've raised it this afternoon.

There's time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to speak to the comments made by the member from Etobicoke North. He seemed very proud of what his government's done. He talked a little wee bit about the actual minimum wage, then he went on a verbal barrage about all the bad things other parties have done. But he seemed to be quite resplendent in what he thinks his Liberals have done.

I'll just tell you, he talked about increases; and the last speaker as well, from Thunder Bay, talked about increases. I'll tell you this: They've doubled the deficit from virtually nothing to \$12 billion, and it's going to go to \$15 billion. That's going in the wrong direction. That's an increase we're not looking forward to. They've taken the debt, roughly \$135 billion when they took power, and when they're done, it will be \$270 billion—probably higher because they're overachieving when it comes to spending. It scares the daylights out of me. They took energy rates from about 2.3 cents a kilowatt to now 12.2 cents on average. That's a great increase that's really helping our economy. They took energy rates that used to be the lowest in Canada and North America and they're soon going to be the highest in North America, another increase that I'm sure the people—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I don't know how they can be proud. The numbers we're talking about are 600,000 to a million men and women every day getting up without a job. Now, where's the hope of their great party in that, Mr. Speaker? And another thing they can be proud of: a \$1.1-billion boondoggle on the gas plants that could be going to health care, which—we keep hearing in this House daily that people can't have their medicines. They can't have hip surgeries in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound because they boondoggled and wasted so much money. EHealth: another boondoggle and nightmare. Ornge: the fiasco there—Chris Mazza and his things are going. You can't even hope to get good health care.

Mr. Speaker, what other Premier—McGuinty and Wynne have had two criminal investigations going on simultaneously with all of these other nightmares. They're overachieving, Mr. Speaker. We can't handle much more of their overachieving. It's time for an election. We need to go now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I thank my honourable PC colleagues from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry and Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, because I have to. I'd also like to congratulate the remarks of my colleague from Thunder Bay-Atikokan, from the Liberal side, and of course my honourable colleague, always outfitted with sartorial splendour, from Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

I was struck by how he mentioned—kind of in the past tense—that they were the champions of the minimum wage. I'd like to perhaps, first of all, suggest simply that we are in a minority government and, perhaps even more so than otherwise, we are not only prone but also required to listen to all parties and to formulate policy. Whether, sir, you have great ideas to help move the ball down the field, I think we as a government are obligated to listen.

I would simply say, though, that once the leader of the third party emerged out of the clouds of darkness and her vows of silence and came out and spoke about the minimum wage, we were certainly happy to have her support, because ultimately this is going to benefit many, many Ontarians, something in the order of about 500,000-plus Ontarians, who continue to work at minimum wage.

I would just remind my colleagues and those who are listening that, under the Tory party for eight long, dark years, the minimum wage was not increased even one time. And that, Speaker, is perhaps, in a nutshell, as I said earlier, the factoid about the Americanization of Ontario, creating what I would call a United States of Ontario, which we want to prevent. And as some of the colleagues internally in the PC Party suggested, it inspired them to climb down from their right-to-work-for-less, or this million-jobs sloganeering, bill.

So, Speaker, let's get this minimum wage act passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon and have an opportunity to contribute to the debate regarding the minimum wage in Ontario. I've got about 20 minutes, and I want to bring a perspective to the debate on Bill 165—I'll use the long title—An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the minimum wage, from the people that I represent in the great riding of Leeds-Grenville.

At the start, Mr. Speaker, I want to commend our labour critic, the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, for his excellent leadoff. I think he did 10 or 11 minutes the other day, and followed it up with 49 minutes this afternoon. I think he really did an excellent job in explaining some of our caucus's position. In his remarks, he also showed very clearly how this bill isn't the jobs plan that Ontario so desperately needs now. So while this bill does represent some good news for those lowest-paid Ontarians, it really does not offer any hope to the one million of our fellow citizens of this great province that woke up this morning without a job.

Hope for them, I'd say, was found in our leader Tim Hudak's Million Jobs Act, which the government and its

enablers in the NDP voted against last week. How a government that has absolutely no ideas on kick-starting private sector job creation could in good conscience vote against our reasonable plan to get people back to work is really beyond me.

Whether I was at the Grenville Federation of Agriculture banquet or the annual palliative care telethon or any of the events that I attended over the weekend, people were very shocked to hear about the NDP-Liberal coalition opposing that bill.

1610

When you look at the five components of the bill, people were confused on how two parties that claim to be interested in creating good-paying jobs for Ontarians wouldn't be on board with that bill. It's true. With the votes last Thursday, the coalition of the NDP and the Liberals showed us that they're against a number of things, and essentially the five things that were in the bill. They're against lower hydro rates for businesses and families. They're against lower taxes and controlling government spending. They're against reducing apprenticeship ratios and getting more young people into the skilled trades, increasing trade with our provinces from coast to coast and cutting red tape for businesses.

I'm extremely disappointed that the Million Jobs Act was defeated last week. At least Ontarians now know where the other two parties stand, and when Ontarians see very clearly that the NDP—you know, I was at the Manning conference briefly on the weekend, and I heard someone refer to you guys as the "spend-DP," so it was interesting. It really decided, for me, that they don't understand how to set the conditions for the private sector to start hiring. I'm confident that Ontario PCs—if we can get into government, I'm positive that the Million Jobs Act will be a government bill under a Tim Hudak government, and I look forward to that day.

I guess I should be fair to the NDP, though, about some of the comments about the Million Jobs Act. I know that according to the member from Kenora-Rainy River, she thought it was too ambitious for us to put this bill forward. I really couldn't believe, when I heard her leadoff to the debate on Thursday, that she indicated that we don't need a million jobs. In fact, I think she used a figure that we only need 588,000, so that we were being too greedy to try to create too many jobs in Ontario.

Mr. Bill Walker: She didn't really say that, did she?

Mr. Steve Clark: Yes, she did. She was against our plan to create an economic climate where private sector investment would create one million jobs because, well, that's more than we need. That's what she said.

So to the NDP's way of thinking, we should settle for 588,000 jobs and leave those 412,000 additional good-paying jobs—we should leave those to the other provinces. I think that was indirectly what she was saying. I think the NDP think Ontarians who have a job don't deserve an opportunity to get a better one, and I certainly don't agree with that. I can't wait for—maybe when they take that plan to the people, maybe they'll name it the "just barely enough jobs and not a single one more act."

Maybe that's what they'll name that bill that they were proposing, or at least I thought that they were proposing, last Thursday.

But, Speaker, I want to make sure that I give ample time to the debate on Bill 165. As we've heard, the bill doesn't actually increase the minimum wage, and I think that's a bit of a misconception that's out in the communities. In fact, there was no debate or vote in the Legislature earlier this year when the Premier did announce that Ontario's minimum wage was rising to \$11 an hour starting on June 1. I can tell you that I had a number of people, mostly owners of small businesses, I would say, who contacted me to express some level of surprise, indicating that there wasn't a role for individual MPPs in that debate regarding that announcement. They were surprised, Speaker. I think some of them were also disappointed—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: Not because, Minister, they were against Ontario minimum wage earners receiving an increase. More than anyone, I think, these employers have a very keen understanding of the struggles that their employees who are working at the minimum wage are going through. They see it every day and hear every day from their employees who are trying to balance their family's budget at a time when the cost of living just keeps going up and up and up in Ontario. I think the business owners were disappointed in the process because they wanted an opportunity for their MPP—in the case of Leeds–Grenville, myself—to come here and to speak about how that increase in the minimum wage would affect their businesses.

They also wanted me to talk about the incredible pressure that small business owners are facing in Ontario today, unprecedented pressures that I have to say go well beyond any concern about the minimum wage. That's why I wanted to begin this afternoon by just sharing some of those comments that I've heard.

One of the best letters I've received was from a small business owner named Cheryl Wykes. She owns Main St. Pizza in the village of Athens. If you ever take a drive into Leeds–Grenville and you manage to get to the beautiful village of Athens, I highly recommend coming in and seeing Cheryl and meeting her employees. Like many hard-working small business owners, Cheryl is facing a lot of pressure in keeping her restaurant going. The talk of increasing the minimum wage was adding to that stress. I just wanted to quote some excerpts from something that she wrote to me. She said, "If you want to give the lower income a break, let them spend their money they do earn by cutting the taxes they pay. This will help the economy and take the burden off the small business owner.

"I opened this store 15 years ago and it is just getting harder and harder to pay the bills. Hydro sucks up any extra money there is."

She mentions the skyrocketing cost of hydro; I just want to stop for a second to make that point. It doesn't matter what issue I'm talking about to the people in my

riding of Leeds–Grenville, the subject of electricity costs and the fact that they're spiralling out of control always comes up in the conversation. The government's utter mismanagement of the electricity sector and what that has done to people's hydro bills—whether they own a business or are just trying to keep a roof over their head—is something that you guys over there are ignoring, really, at your own peril. People out there are hurting like never before, and the Minister of Energy's response is to stand up and announce a long-term energy plan that's going to increase rates even more. It's unbelievable to me that that's what the—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: But back to Cheryl's letter—thank you very much for that—which focused not only on what these threats to her business future would do to her if she was forced to close, but also to her employees. I think that's a very important aspect. In the letter, she goes on to write, "If the doors close, one family will lose their home and the other who has a young family will be on unemployment—which will not pay rent and feed a family.

"The small business owners should not have to deal with this kind of stress."

Those are some of the comments that I received from small business owners like Cheryl when this was first proposed. I think people like Cheryl understand that Ontario is a better place for business owners, employees and their families when Queen's Park is taking less out of their pockets. That's a concept that I don't think Premier Wynne and the Liberals are able to grasp. To her government, people and businesses are just revenue streams to feed this insatiable appetite for more and more spending.

If you want to talk to some small business people, I'd be more than happy to connect you with some folks like Cheryl in my riding. Go ask Cheryl's customers; go down to Athens, sit with those customers and ask them what they think of your plan to increase the gas tax by 10 cents a litre to pay for transit in Toronto. I can tell you, Speaker, I could go all across my riding—to Athens, to Westport, to Lansdowne and Spencerville, but I'm not particularly sure you'd allow me to say what they've been telling me; I think, in some cases, it might be contravening some of the standing orders. But they're very, very concerned about the reckless policies that this government has continued to advance under this Premier's watch over the last year.

Now we know that the government has announced the minimum wage increase. It happened without any particular debate in the chamber. The question people are now asking me is, just how does Bill 165 fit into that process? The answer, to many folks who are wondering, is that it amends the Employment Standards Act, 2000. It creates a provision to adjust the minimum wage every year.

What we've got here essentially is a process bill. It's an important issue; I'm not going to say it isn't. It is a very important issue, but this is essentially a process bill. As most people who have read the bill know, starting in October 2015 the minimum wage would be indexed to

the Ontario consumer price index, or CPI. The adjustments would be rounded to the nearest five cents. It's also important to note that there would be no adjustment if it would result in a decrease to the minimum wage. So the process is going to apply to all minimum wage classes, whether it's students under 18, liquor servers, hunting and fishing guides or homeworkers.

1620

As Mr. McNaughton, our labour critic, outlined, in finishing off his remarks, our caucus is supporting it. I know there were a number of other speakers today who have reaffirmed that. Certainly, we've seen that business groups like the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Ontario Convenience Stores Association are also onside with the process established in Bill 165.

The chamber has been particularly vocal on establishing a new way to handle future minimum wage increases. Here's what they had to say just prior to the legislation being introduced: "This issue is important. There is broad consensus that the current process—or lack thereof—governing the minimum wage does not work for employers and workers."

At the conclusion of the particular report I read, the Ontario chamber recommended using CPI for the basis of future increases. With some time I have left, I'm going to quote the Ontario chamber document, just to be able to read it into the record. This is from the Ontario chamber:

"Ontario businesses want a process for determining the minimum wage that is predictable, transparent, and fair. They also want a process that ensures that Ontario remains competitive. Tying the minimum wage to an economic indicator like the CPI makes good business sense.

"By tying the minimum wage to the CPI, both employers and employees will be able to reasonably predict the increases in their labour costs and salaries, respectively. Everyone will benefit. Workers won't be subject to long freezes and deterioration of their purchasing power. Employers won't be subject to sudden and unforeseen increases in the cost of doing business.

"Tying the wage to an economic indicator removes political interference from the process—something that the other three options we considered could not guarantee. This option is also the most transparent of all the options considered and is one that can be easily understood by employers and employees."

So that's the Ontario chamber document. That was their endorsement.

I also had an opportunity to visit a number of my chambers in the break from December to when we returned last month. In fact, I had a chance to make a presentation at three of them: the 1000 Islands Gananoque, Brockville and also the North Grenville chamber in Kemptville. I had the pleasure of hosting our finance critic, the member for Nipissing. All three events were very good events because they gave us an opportunity to talk to small businesses and to hear their concerns.

The things that I heard they were worried about were the high taxes in Ontario, the high energy costs, and red

tape and overregulation. Certainly for those who have read the bill, those aspects that I've heard from our business community aren't addressed in Bill 165.

In fact, just before I had the chance to speak at the Brockville event, which was quite a large event—it was quite a large breakfast that they had—I did have a chance to look at the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's document called *Emerging Stronger 2014*.

That report was quite interesting. It showed me that less than half of Ontario businesses feel confident about Ontario's economy, yet among the same group, 74% felt good about their own company's future. I commented at the meeting on what a disturbing disconnect that was for me. While the business community, like those who were there to hear me speak, felt confident about their own ability to succeed, they lacked the confidence in this government to get their house in order. That, to me, is not a good combination, because we know very well that when businesses don't feel confident about Ontario and its economy, they won't invest here.

We've had examples here in the chamber—places like Kellogg's and Heinz, or, in my own home community of Brockville, Abbott labs, where they chose to invest elsewhere. The companies didn't go bankrupt. They're still making those same products, but the cost of doing business here and their overall unease with our economy made them make a very conscious decision to make those products in another jurisdiction.

I'm worried, I'm very worried, because I see that the confidence in our economy is so low, especially from a group of business people who normally are extremely upbeat, and still remain upbeat about their own ability to succeed in the market. So, you know, Speaker, we've all had a discussion about the mess that Ontario is in, the fact that our debt is approximately \$278 billion. In just five hours that we're here for this afternoon's debate, our debt is going to increase by slightly more than \$6.7 million. It's going to grow by \$32 million today, \$225 million by the end of the week and \$978 million by the end of this month. That's the bad news, but here's what makes it really, really bad: We've doubled the debt in a period where our provincial revenues grew from \$65 billion 10 years ago to \$114 billion today. It's a 75% increase in revenue. So we've got extra revenue, but we're still having this \$11.7-billion hole in the budget that leaves even more debt to be passed on to our children and grandchildren. What's really shocking is that that \$11.7-billion debt is, in fact, higher than the previous year's deficit of \$9.2 billion.

So when I was at that chamber event, I asked the men and women who were there what would happen if they did that in their own business. How many of them would have a job to go back to if that was the playbook that ran their particular small business? We all know that no one—no one—would be able to run a business the way that this government runs their operation. It's just not sustainable.

I also want to look at the issue of the number of minimum wage—I know I only have about a minute left

before we have questions and comments, but there was a study by the Wellesley Institute that was released last October that showed that between 2003 and 2011 the portion of Ontario's workforce earning the minimum wage has more than doubled. So when Dalton McGuinty was elected in 2003, 4.3% of Ontarians were minimum wage earners, and just eight years later, that figure was 9%.

Again, it's just sad that we're in that situation. We had a plan that I thought was an exceptional one, that was reasonable. The other two parties banded together yet again and defeated it. This is a process bill; we're going to support it. But I really believe, and my colleagues agree, that we really have to sit down in a minority Parliament and talk about a jobs plan. This bill is not a jobs plan. Our constituents need relief. They need government to act in their best interests. This bill, while it is a process bill, while all three parties support it, isn't going to fix that fundamental issue with Ontario and the bad management that the Liberal Party has had so far.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I listened intently to the member from Leeds–Grenville, and while he mentioned that, of course, this bill is a process bill—definitely, it is. Good that they are going to support it, I guess. It's really interesting to sometimes hear the members from the PC caucus stand up in this House and talk about what needs to be done when they have essentially allowed two significant opportunities for them to do something about the state of the economy or the health care system—and there are good people in this party who have good, creative ideas. I mean, there are good people in all parties, right? It's just a fact. But what the member from Leeds–Grenville could have said or could have done, actually, in the last budget process was address the hydro rates, which he says is a major barrier to those small businesses, and yet he did nothing. This party has essentially rendered themselves irrelevant in the province of Ontario. All that they do each time when they stand up in this House is they highlight all the problems, and yet they missed two significant opportunities to leverage what power they have in this minority government to actually help the people that they say they care about.

To the million jobs plan—which he talked at length about, not necessarily the bill—we could not support that million jobs plan, because if we supported it just as they did, then two parties would be wrong. Quite honestly, the million jobs plan is essentially following the same path and the same model that the Liberals have been operating on for 11 years, and it has not proven to be successful. So why should we stand up and support it?

1630

It's going to be an interesting debate today. There are a lot of misconceptions around the minimum wage that have been propagated in this House, and I look forward to addressing those at length later on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very pleased to speak about Bill 165 and the comments from my esteemed colleague from Leeds–Grenville. I heard about him talking to his community about their concerns.

I'm going to tell you what the concerns are of the workers in my community. There are a lot of civil servants in my community, and do you know what their concern is right now? Losing their job—because their cousins at the federal level are there to clean up. They terminate people left, right and centre. That's the concern in my community.

So I hope they will change their goal. Instead of talking about creating jobs, they are doing away with jobs. The million jobs plan—they are probably going to hire those who were let go by the federal government, and then they will cut their salary in half, so that will help them to create a million jobs.

I think workers and small business want predictability. They want to know how much they will have to pay their workers next year, and they will know in advance because it's going to be according to the cost of living.

I think that we should all be supporting this bill—and we will live in a community.

My family are small business—and do you know what? They wanted to share the wealth. They just don't want them to succeed—but all around them to succeed too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to follow my colleague from Leeds–Grenville. I listened intently, and everything he said I have to concur with.

Just before I get going, I'm going to have to offer a response to the “spend-DP” colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo who went on record saying that we missed two significant opportunities. I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't clarify for the House and for those people listening at home. Two significant opportunities would have been sitting on their hands in the first budget that enabled the Liberals to stay in power—then, the second time, they all rose unanimously, with their hands in the air, and supported them unanimously. Those prop-up parties—“spend-DPers” have no ability to talk to us about significant opportunities to put this government where they need to be.

Mr. Speaker, as my great colleague said, this is a process bill. What we need to be talking more about is less taxes. We're supportive of this bill. We believe in it. But at the end of the day, what we need is less taxes so those people who are on minimum wage have more money to spend on the things they probably care about.

We need lower energy rates. Right now, I have colleagues in my community who are coming to me and saying, “It's great that I'm going to get a few more shekels a week, but at the end of the day, if my energy rates keep doubling and tripling under this current Liberal-NDP government, it doesn't really matter if you give me five bucks more an hour because I'm still not going to be able to keep up.”

Mr. Speaker, less red tape: The small business owners, again, are saying to me, "If we had less red tape, lower energy costs and less taxes, we'd actually have more money to give our employees"—and they'd gladly do that. But at this point, they're barely keeping up, keeping their businesses afloat.

I think what my colleague was trying to get back to is, there is a million jobs plan that our leader, Tim Hudak, has put on the table, and that we believe we are able to do. Mike Harris's former government did it. They created more than a million.

It's interesting that one of the NDP said, "You shouldn't try to create 1,588,000." Well, you should talk to the people in my riding. I hope they actually heard that. There are lots of people in my riding still looking for work because this government has run us into the worst deficit and the worst debt situation we've ever been in. There are people leaving by the multitudes.

Mr. Speaker, we need to turn the province around, we need to ensure there's a jobs plan, and we need to lower energy costs, lower taxes and cut the red tape.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question and comment.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as I always do, to my good friend from Leeds–Grenville. We share much in common, being both former mayors. When he speaks, I try to listen. When he speaks and he talks about my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River not understanding the Conservative plan on a million jobs, I can only comment—I wish he was here for me to comment on this—that I'm not surprised she doesn't understand. Nobody else understands it either, including all of the editorial opinion across this entire province. Everybody has said that this is a plan that is not focused. It is pie in the sky; it's up in the air. If you don't understand it, perhaps you do mispeak; I don't know.

But I'll tell you who does understand your plans, and that's your own members. The member from Lanark–Frontenac understands only too well this plan and the right to work for less. He has spoken against it. The member for Durham understands this plan only too well, and the right to work for less. He is on tape speaking against it in front of his fellow Conservatives. The former member from Thornhill understands it only too well, in his parting shots to his own party when he left—that this party does not understand it, and the right to work for less is a really wrong thing to do. Last but not least, that poor guy from Essex who wanted to be a candidate for your party, who had the temerity, the unmitigated gall, to question the leader and say, "This is not a good plan," the million jobs plan and the right to work for less which is enmeshed in it, got turfed before he even had a chance to run.

Do people understand what you're talking about? If the member from Kenora–Rainy River doesn't understand it, that's one thing. But when your own party members and your own party wannabes don't understand it, that's quite another.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round. I return to the member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank all my colleagues for their responses and their comments and their questions.

I also want to go back to a comment that I made earlier in my address, and that's regarding the fact that the number of minimum wage earners in the workforce has doubled under the Liberals in the last eight years. Speaker, that means 464,000 people now earn the minimum wage. One of the disturbing trends beyond the sheer increase is the fact that in 2011, nearly 40% of those minimum wage earners were over the age of 25.

So let's look at those workers. I'm afraid the prospect of an increase to \$11 an hour this year and the new process that's going to deal with future increases isn't going to give cause for great celebration from those 464,000 workers, because, let's face it, the government is going to cancel out that increase in the increased fees, the increased taxes—heck, just the increase every month in your hydro bill will soon eat up any increase that is given on the minimum wage.

I hear it every day in my constituency office. People are more concerned about the increased fees, taxes, the fact that they're wondering how they are going to pay that propane bill that has doubled from the time they filled their tank at the start of the winter to now. They're concerned at how they are going to be able to do home renovations, to fix that roof, to be able to pay that hydro bill consistently, to deal with some of the issues that this government continues to throw at them. That's the concern.

So let's hurry up. Let's get this process bill passed. Let's move forward with something far more substantive. We really need a jobs plan. These people need some hope that we're going to be able to provide that relief that they so desperately deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a privilege, again, and always a privilege to stand here and speak about bills being put forward by this government.

This Bill 165—and I'm going to try my very best in 20 minutes to not deviate from discussing this very bill. This bill sets out inflationary increases. It does not set out what constitutes a living wage. It does not mention \$11 an hour. It does not state anything other than that once a year, the wage—whatever it is set at—will rise by that of inflation or CPI.

What it does say, as well, though, which is very troubling to me—and I think all members should read what is contained within the content of this bill—is that if this bill passes, and if we have inflationary increases on whatever the amount is set—and the government has announced that will likely be \$11—if that, in fact, happens, I invite the members to review what is contained here in the bill—it's a very small bill—on page 3, paragraph 10: "Before October 1, 2020, and every five years

thereafter, the minister shall cause a review of the minimum wage and the process for adjusting the minimum wage to be commenced."

1640

So, if this bill passes, and the government sets the amount of the minimum wage at \$11, which is not contained in the bill, and then there are CPI increases to that \$11, the next time the amount will be considered is 2020—six years from now. Six years from now, we will be looking at whether the \$11 increased by the CPI is sufficient for the people of Ontario.

I start with that because many people in Ontario, quite rightly, have been clamouring for a living wage. Some many months ago, I was one of a lot of MPPs who was approached by people who were advocates, and who were strong, and who felt that it was unfair for ordinary people, who were working, to work 37.5 or 40 hours a week and still find themselves in poverty. In fact, I can think of nothing that anyone could say to justify having someone have a full-time job in this province, work to the best of their abilities, go to work every day, strive to build this community and this province, and come home living under the poverty line. If anybody here thinks that that's a good thing, please stand up and say it. Because it makes no economic or moral sense at all that people should have a full-time job and find themselves living under the poverty line.

When they stuck a piece of paper under my nose and said, "Would you support \$14 an hour?"—I'm not going to hide away, in spite of all of the things that have been said and happened in this House—I signed it, because I think that anyone who works hard should live above the poverty line. What is the poverty line in Ontario? In Ontario, the poverty line is about \$23,000 for a single person living in a major metropolitan area. Everybody in Ontario doesn't live in a major metropolitan area, but the majority of people who are employed do. That \$23,000 is not a lot of money on which to live. If you live in a place like Toronto, you know that you're going to need at least \$1,000 a month for rent, even for a small one-bedroom apartment. If you live in a smaller city, it might only be \$800 or \$900, but you're still going to need that money. You're going to need money for clothing, transportation, food, and everything else, and that amount makes it up to about \$23,000 a year. That's the absolute minimum, or else you are living in poverty.

What does this bill do? The bill does not set out how much the minimum wage is going to be. That is contained in another body. The other body of information, which I got off the website—because it's not contained in the bill—sets out how much money a person will earn in Ontario. We've heard a lot about \$11 over the last few days, but what we haven't heard about is all of the other monies that other people are going to make. The general minimum wage is going, according to this, from \$10.25 to \$11 an hour. The student minimum wage is going from \$9.60 an hour to \$10.30 an hour. The liquor server's minimum wage is going from \$8.90 an hour to \$9.55 an hour. The hunting and fishing guide's minimum wage is

going from \$51.25 for the first five hours worked, or less, to—excuse me; from \$51.25 to \$55, and if you work all day, consecutive—for more than five hours, it's going from \$102.50 to \$110.

Last but not least, the homeworker's wage is going from \$11.28 an hour to \$12.10 an hour.

Now, I don't want people to think that a homeworker is a homemaker, because a homeworker is anyone who works in their home. A lot of these people answer calls for companies. If somebody phones up and wants to hire a plumber, it rings over to the house of someone else, who answers it, and that's what a homeworker does. Or it's women, primarily women, who work in—it's not sweatshop labour, because they're working in their own house, but they sew clothes for manufacturers, so that the manufacturer doesn't have to pay the costs of having a factory. That's what a homeworker is.

These wages are all pretty poor; they're all pretty poor. All of those wages under this bill are going to go up by the huge sum of the CPI. This year, the CPI will be approximately 1%. That means when the CPI comes into effect, as a result of this bill, if the government's motion is to have \$11, they'll go up to \$11.10. The next year, if it remains at 1%, and there's every indication that inflation is not increasing at all, it will go up to \$11.21.

Now, when you take these factors and you look at this amount of money that, again, is not in the bill, you will see that people who earn this wage will continue to live in poverty. Do some calculations—and I'm glad that the minister is here. Do some calculations: At a 37.5-hour week, which is the industry average in Ontario—most people work plus or minus an hour or two, one side or the other of that—at \$10.25 today, people on a 52-week year, if they work 37.5 hours for all 52 weeks of the year, earn \$19,987.76. That's how much they make, which brings them \$4,000 under the poverty line.

The government's largesse, raising it up to \$11 an hour, takes it up to \$412.50 a week. For 52 weeks, it's \$21,450 a year, about \$2,000 under the poverty line.

If it were to be \$12—which some people on the other side are very critical of the NDP for saying we'd like to move to, over a two-year period—that amount of money will result, in two more years, in \$23,400, which is about \$400 over the poverty line. That's the escape. That's the place at which you escape poverty: not at \$11 and not with a CPI of 1% a year. You escape poverty when you reach over \$23,000 if you are a single individual.

Now, you're still going to be in poverty if you're a single mother with one or two kids—

Ms. Catherine Fife: No child care.

Mr. Michael Prue: —with no child care, and all of the inherent difficulties that come with that. You're still going to be in poverty. You're going to be in worse poverty at \$10.25, and maybe slightly better poverty at \$11. Even at \$12, it's going to be very hard to escape, but at least we can say that a single individual with no children has a gleam and a hope if they can somehow get to that \$12 range and escape poverty in the province of Ontario.

Why is poverty such a big thing to me? It's a big thing to me because—you've heard this before, and I probably will say this until the day I die—I'm from Regent Park. I saw enough poverty in my young life to last a lifetime. I saw enough poverty, not necessarily from my family, but in all the people who lived around us who had menial jobs or no jobs, who struggled daily. They weren't all on some kind of assistance. Most of them were working poor, and they worked as hard as they could with the skills and abilities that they had, and they never seemed to be able to get ahead.

1650

To me, it is absolutely essential that we take the time to determine how to help people escape that. Most of these people can work. Most of these people would die to have a job that paid \$12 an hour so that they could pay their own way and they could make it. The NDP welcomes indexing, but you cannot index at a poverty level, because all that is going to happen if you index poverty is you are going to continue poverty, and that's the reality. If you index \$11 till the year 2020, as this bill will allow, people will be in the same poverty circumstance in 2020 as they are today, and nothing, but nothing, will change.

That's why we had a struggle with this. We wanted to find a solution. We wanted to have people escape from poverty. We have suggested—and some would say it's timid; some would say the NDP could have said some more. But I will tell you that if you raise it from \$11 to \$11.50 next year, and raise it the year after to \$12 and then cap it at the CPI, you will have people until 2020 who do not live in poverty. If you do it the way the government is suggesting it, then you are entrenching and enshrining poverty for the next six years.

What can we do? Can we support a bill that's going to do that? I think not very easily. Can we say it's a slight improvement upon \$10.25 an hour? Yes, we can. But are we going to be able to stand there and hold our heads high and say, "We did something to eradicate poverty in Ontario"? I don't think that this bill is the tool to do that.

Mr. Speaker, we are mindful in the NDP of the effects that raising the minimum wage too fast may have on small business. That's why we talked specifically about offsetting the cost to small business by a reduction in the small business tax in 2014 from 4.5% down to 4%, in 2015 from 4% down to 3.5% and in 2016 from 3.5% down to 3%. This is not a radical idea. The province of Manitoba and its NDP government have gotten rid of the small business tax altogether and totally. It is an amount of money that will save small business about \$90 million with which to pay their employees a better wage.

We know that small businesses, by and large, try to pay their employees more than the minimum wage. In fact, some of the very best employers in this province are small business people. But they need some help. On the other hand, does big business need this? Does big business need to pay poverty wages? I ask you, when you go in to shop at a place like Walmart, when you go in to have a hamburger at McDonald's, where the people working behind those counters earn minimum wage—do

they need any kind of financial assistance from us? I think not. I'm not worried about those, but I am worried about the people who work there. I am worried about the people who, when they get a job, are also given a list of the nearest food banks, because those corporations know that the wages they pay cannot sustain the individual, particularly, often, when they do not work 37.5 or 40 hours a week. Those businesses often do that.

I'm also mindful of the farmers of Ontario, and I consider them to be small business. I'm mindful of the fact that we have in this province a policy and a belief that Ontarians should eat Ontario food that is grown here. Not only is it safer, not only is it more nutritious, not only do we know how it is grown, not only does it provide jobs, not only is it what we need to do for our own food security, but it is simply the right thing to do.

Now, when the farmers came before the budget deliberations to the finance committee, they were very, very clear that a rise in the minimum wage needed to be offset in order for them to afford it. I heard them loud and clear—loud and clear. They compete, not with other farmers in Ontario, but with the foodstuffs that the people of Ontario buy from all over the world, primarily from California, Arizona, Mexico, Chile and South Africa. Go to your food shelves in your store and you'll see where these come from. The wage that is paid in California, Arizona and New Mexico, where a lot of our food comes from, is about \$7 an hour. It is very difficult for the farmers of Ontario to pay increased wages and still be able to be competitive with the farmers south of the border. So I understand, and the NDP understands, that as small business people, the farmers need some kind of offset if they are to pay a living and decent wage here in Ontario.

I'm also mindful of the fact, in this government's own wage bill, that farm workers pay up to \$100 or more a week to live in the farmers' barracks, eating the farmers' food, so it's a pretty hard life. It's a pretty hard life they have, and it would be a lot better for many of them if they had sufficient money for themselves and to send home to their families or, if their families are with them, to make sure that those kids actually had a chance.

The NDP also believes that—and part of what we put forward was—there are monies that could be offset from other places. Maybe I'm going to deviate just a fraction here. There are monies that can come from other places: the salaries of management and bonuses. My God, CEOs' salaries are horrendous in this province, and we keep waiting and asking how something can be done to offset that. Surely, some of the monies the government saves can be put towards helping small business people. The tax avoidance of \$2.4 billion that is outstanding from the last tax year that has not been paid to the province of Ontario because there aren't the people to collect it anymore—we sent them all to Ottawa, and then Ottawa laid them off—or the people who send their money offshore: We need as a government to start looking at how to collect that money.

We need also to close up the planned loopholes that will come back in 2017 so that corporations don't pay HST on luxury items like skybox tickets or gasoline or restaurant meals. You know, when I fill up my car, I pay HST. When I go to the restaurant, I pay HST. If I'm ever lucky enough to get a ticket to a major league professional game, which run into the hundreds of dollars per ticket in this city, then I pay the HST. And if I as an individual have to pay it, why don't the corporations have to pay it? That amounts to \$1.2 billion that can go to help small business people, to help the poor.

To close up, I think that we need to do much more. We can do much more. We can help people. We can help the servers in this province as well by passing Bill 49, because the servers should be allowed to keep their tips, because even under this bill, they're still going to be making 75 cents less than the general minimum wage. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much for your comments. Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Beaches–East York for his comments. I thought they were fair and balanced, as is usually his approach. But there was a piece there that I would like to comment on, and that was the part of his remarks that referred to the minimum wage in connection to poverty and the minimum wage in terms of bringing people beyond the poverty level. When I talk to people in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan about this issue, and it's about minimum wage and poverty, I remind them that the minimum wage and the action that we've taken as a government, from \$6.85 to \$10.25 to \$11, is not the only thing that we've done when it comes to poverty reduction in the province of Ontario.

1700

So I think that if we're going to link these two—and they are inextricably linked, poverty and minimum wage—it would be important in our conversations if we included for people the working poor, the totality of what's been brought into the Legislature over the last 10 years when it comes to supporting people, the working poor, and those living in poverty.

There are a long series of tax credits that have been put in place, many of which are focused on the working poor in Ontario, which provide significant relief for them when it comes to their household family income. There are at least four or five, off the top of my head: the Northern Ontario Energy Credit, the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, and the child tax benefit that's going up by, I think, \$100 this year, I believe.

There are issues like full-day kindergarten that provide daycare for people who maybe didn't have it before. We reduced the personal income tax by 1% on the first \$37,000 of income years ago, and we removed 90,000 people off the tax rolls completely.

So I thought his comments were fair and balanced, but I would only say that there is a lot more that needs to be

brought to the discussion when we're talking about poverty and minimum wage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a privilege to follow my colleague from Beaches–East York. I always find him a very entertaining speaker, normally. He brings up lots of good points, normally fairly balanced.

In this case, he kind of confused me. Maybe I misheard some of his points, but I'll try to offer what I thought I heard him saying. At one point he made a comment, although he was talking about those who are under the poverty level, that big businesses do not need support. But my understanding is that the NDP are pushing very hard for Chrysler to get an \$800-million grant—incentive, subsidy, whatever you want to call it. So I'm not certain how that really balances out with those people who are in the lower incomes or the middle incomes, particularly. I'm not certain how you expect those low- and middle-income earners to subsidize this, especially after enabling the Liberal government, with those votes that they made in the past in the budgets, to triple our energy sector costs in the last four, five or six years. So I'm getting a little struggling there.

He talked about how farmers can't afford increased wages, and yet the farmers, the fruit growers and the nursery industries, particularly in the southern part of the province, are going to be hardest hit by some of these measures. We've, again, stood on principle and said, "Why don't you cut some of the other things, those direct costs to those manufacturers, to those farmers, to those fruit growers, such as energy and taxes and red tape? That would actually give people a lot more money. They'd be able to provide more in their wages if they so chose, rather than being forced."

There are significant increases coming to all of these small business people because of the Liberal government's mismanagement, the boondoggles we've had, the billion-dollar waste of the gas plants. They've doubled the deficit. They've doubled the debt. And this "spend-DP" party has actually enabled them to do all of that. So I was just a little concerned when I heard some of those.

You can't have it both ways. You can't continually talk and say, "Bad big business, but we'd like to give you \$800 million. We want to reach out and help the poor, but we keep voting to actually add on to your tax burden and to your energy costs, those significant energy costs, and to your red tape burden."

These small businesses are relenting—I have small business people in my riding. They're basically at the breaking point and can't handle any more of this NDP–Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's always a pleasure, actually, to comment on the member from Beaches–East York. He brings certainly a new level of understanding and, of course, some facts, and facts are always good for a debate, I think. The stats that he actually brought to this

discussion are very helpful, and he clearly outlined what our strategy is as a party. Some people may have thought it took us a little while to get there, but considering that we were already at \$11 in 2011, I think we landed in the right place and I think it's a good balance.

I like the fact that he brought the farmers into this debate, because they are small business men and women and they made a very compelling case for a balanced approach when we talk about the minimum wage. We have certainly, I think, come to the table in a respectful dialogue with the farmers of this province.

I like the fact that he mentioned child care as a factor in the entire equation on poverty reduction, but child care is also an economic development driver. For every \$1 you invest in child care, the return on investment is anywhere from \$3 to \$7, depending on the model. A preferred model for me, personally, is the not-for-profit, because those funds then directly go towards quality and also to wages.

You won't hear any of these comments coming from the Conservative caucus.

The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound started off his comments by saying that he was confused by this debate. It must be frustrating to be a member of the PC caucus, to be so squarely on the sidelines, screeching. Honestly, it must be frustrating, because having not participated in this Legislature, they sort of absconded their responsibility as a whole. So not only are they confused; they're almost entirely irrelevant.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Beaches-East York. I listened intently to the points he was making. I'll talk about three points. One is a point of clarification on a point he raised—and two, where I found his comments a little perplexing because his words do not match the actions of his party and his caucus, and I wanted to highlight that for him as well.

As to his point about review, I think Bill 165 is very clear that every five years there will be a review of the minimum wage and the manner in which the minimum wage is determined. I see the wording as fairly clear, so I'm not sure where his confusion is coming from, and I'll be more than happy to speak with him in that regard.

The second point I want to make, Speaker, is that at \$11 an hour—which will be starting June 1, and it will go up every year as the cost of living goes up—a single mom or a single person working full-time will be living above the minimum wage, after taxes. What the honourable member forgot to mention is that we have a lot of tax credits, not to mention a very low income tax rate, for those who are on low income, that helps them move off the poverty line. So you cannot just look at the whole number, as you did the math, and not look at all the tax implications and the tax benefits that are in place for those who are on low income.

The last point I will raise is, he talked about corporate tax for large companies, but it was his party, last Wednesday, that voted, along with the Conservatives, to

keep corporate tax rates as is. I find that very confusing. It was his party's position that corporate tax rates are competitive in Ontario. In fact, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo tweeted as such, which came as a surprise to me—to be the NDP's official policy. So there is a divide in the words the members speak and the actions of the caucus, and clarification would be nice in that regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now return to the member for Beaches-East York for his reply.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank my colleagues from Thunder Bay, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Kitchener-Waterloo and the Minister of Labour for the comments that they have brought to this debate.

To my friend from Thunder Bay-Atikokan: I would agree, there are benefits out there, within the tax system and within government programs. Unfortunately, they don't hit every single individual. For some of them, you must have children. For some of them, you must live in the north. For some of them, you must be over 65. For some of them, you must be disabled. Not everybody hits this category. That's why a minimum wage for the general, broad group is the surest way of taking them out of poverty.

To the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound: I don't know what he's talking about—\$800 to Chrysler—and those were his exact words.

Mr. Bill Walker: Eight hundred million.

Mr. Michael Prue: Now he's saying \$800 million. But he did say \$800. I think I better understand what he's trying to say now. I don't know whether anything has come of that. I know that there are some discussions, and perhaps there need to be some discussions on the issue.

He calls us the "Spend-DP." I would remind him that the party with the best record in Canada of sustained and long-term balanced budgets is not the Conservatives; it is the NDP. The NDP has shown the way across this country, be it in Saskatchewan, in Manitoba, or British Columbia, of doing precisely that, and maybe he just doesn't like that fact.

To the member from Kitchener-Waterloo: Thank you, as always, for your kindness. Yes, I do try to include farmers in small business because they are the backbone.

Finally, to the Minister of Labour: I see very clearly what 2020 says in that legislation. Six years until this is going to be reviewed, whether it's good, bad or indifferent—six years.

He said "above the minimum wage." I think he was trying to say "above the poverty line." I'm not sure. But he did say "above the minimum wage."

Last but not least, I speak for the people of Beaches-East York, I speak in caucus as I see fit, and I make the caucus move.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure today, Mr. Speaker, to speak to Bill 165, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the minimum wage.

I think, again, our critic started off today by saying we will be supporting it. I think at least those businesses who are in favour want to know predictability. Tying it to the consumer price index will certainly at least give them some sense of what's coming, unlike the doubling and tripling of energy rates that we've experienced under this Liberal regime that no one saw coming—they certainly didn't advertise that very well—or the doubling of the debt and the costs that we're carrying there.

I wonder if the people at home understand that we're actually spending \$10.3 billion per year to service our debt. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine how much we could impact the minimum wage levels if we weren't spending \$10.3 billion just servicing the debt? Can you imagine how many people we could help out in long-term-care homes, how many people could actually get their hip surgeries and their cataract surgeries and physiotherapy? That young lady, Madi, who was in here today: We could probably be paying for that—well, we should be paying for that drug anyway, Mr. Speaker. It was reprehensible this morning, the Premier saying that they cannot do it. Other provinces are doing it. They've been able to negotiate the Green Energy Act with the stroke of a pen, they've been able to wipe out gas plants at the cost of \$1.1 billion with the stroke of a pen, but they can't find money for a little girl, to be able to give her the health that she deserves? Mr. Speaker, it's reprehensible.

But I'll get back to the bill at this point. What we believe is that we need to change the whole economic channel so there is vibrancy in our province, there are lots of jobs, and people will be able to provide more jobs, and beyond those minimum wage levels. If we set that table well, Mr. Speaker, we'll have businesses that actually want to come to Ontario. We'll have businesses that want to stay in Ontario, and, God forbid, we'll have some entrepreneurs who actually might want to start a business in Ontario rather than going to Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Alberta, BC or even the eastern provinces.

We need to, as government, set the confines. We need to set the framework, through policy, to engage people and to allow them to run businesses. We don't need to run business, like some of the other parties, the spend-DPers and the Liberals, who think that every job created should be a government job. We believe that free enterprise is where we need to be going. We can set the stage. Like this bill, we can set some of the parameters that allow businesses to actually want to move to that.

We need a resurgence of good-paying jobs in this province. We need people to actually want to stay here. My fear right now is that a lot of the young people, those pages sitting in front of you who are serving us so greatly here in the House every day, are not going to have opportunities here, so they may have to leave, whether they want to or not. Again, that comes back to creating that opportunity.

This increase is not going to lift people out of poverty, and again, this bill doesn't even really allow the job dollar value to change. What it's really saying is we'll set

the process in motion. I believe my colleague from Leeds–Grenville very explicitly pointed that out and clarified it. This bill is only saying this is what we will do process-wise. It's actually not even giving them the increase that lots of people are already thinking.

At \$11 per hour, your take-home wages will be no more than what they were in 2010 after inflation. If you compound that by the increased hydro fees, you increase that by the income taxes, you increase that by all the red tape and bureaucracy that people have to do, the filling out of forms, people are really falling backwards. It's a sad, sad state when we are the laggards, that we're sitting there with our hand out to the federal government. We used to be the proud engine of Confederation. Under this Liberal-NDP regime over the last eight to 10 years, we're now at the back of the bus. We're at the back of the train with our hand out, saying, "Please give us more." That's not who we want to be. We're very proud in this province and we want to be the leader again, and we will be the leader again at some point down the road.

This government—again, I can't get over it. Every day in my constituency office, as with my colleagues here, people are phoning, emailing, dropping in to my office. They're pleading with us to turn around this energy sector; they're pleading with us to get the cost—because that isn't something that's willy-nilly. You can't just put on a sweater, you can't just go out and have a cup of coffee, and expect all of your ills of coldness, particularly in the extreme cold weather we've had over the last month, really, to just lay down and say, "Oh, that's okay; it's all good." There are people out there who are actually making decisions like, "Do I put the heat on or do I feed my family?" Totally unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. We need to get back to the basics. We need to understand what we're doing as a government in setting that up.

We now hear that there's a gas tax potentially of 10 cents a litre coming at us. Again, those people who are most challenged, those people who are less fortunate than most, how are they going to do that? How are they going to put more 10-cents-per-litre increased costs into their gas to get to their job, Mr. Speaker? So there are lots of things that we're doing.

Close to home, in my great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, people are very, very wary. They're still in a critical phase of our economic recovery. I have a colleague—in fact, a dear family friend—Leanne from Hepworth, proprietor of Allan's convenience store. She's the proprietor there. She employs a small number of people. What she said to me when she heard about this legislation coming out was, "You know what, Bill? I'm probably going to have to give all of my staff less hours per week now. I'm already working 60 to 70 hours. My workload's going to go up to 80, 90, maybe 100 hours a week." Now, why would you ever want to do that? Who could continue to sustain that, Mr. Speaker?

It's not, again, that we're necessarily opposed to a level of living, but there are other ways that we can skin this cat. There are other ways that we can do better policy to allow those people out there that are at the lower

fringes in the economic ability to earn wages to be helped.

Again, I come back a number of times to lowering those things that people don't have control over: things like your energy bill, things like your gas tax—10 cents on a litre of gas. People fume over that out there.

The Retail Council of Canada is recommending the same predictable, transparent and fair process for determining Ontario's minimum wage. To do otherwise would have adverse effects on employment levels, particularly among youth and in Ontario's retail, hospitality and leisure sectors.

So, yes, we do support the bill from that perspective, but we can't lose sight. What this government is very good at doing is introducing legislation that just shifts the thought process from the public. They play this spin-and-run game, and they get people thinking about other things. They get people off the topic of: How are you feeling today versus 10 years ago? Do you have more money in your back pocket? Are you able to actually spend on the things you wish, or are you going backwards? Is our health care system in better shape than it was 10 years ago? I think not.

Just a couple of weeks ago, I had two people—seniors in my riding—who were scheduled to have hip surgery. They got a call all of a sudden that the hospital was out of money. They were out of money, so your surgery that you've now been waiting six, eight, 10 months for—maybe a year or more, in some cases—has been cancelled.

I believe my colleague from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry—his Winchester hospital just took a huge hit. How many people are going to be out of work there, Mr. Jimmy McDonnell?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Well, we lost 3,600 jobs—

Mr. Bill Walker: Some 3,600 jobs. But in your hospital alone, you're having another big hit.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Another nine people.

Mr. Bill Walker: Another nine nurse front-line workers.

My colleague Deputy Leader Christine Elliott brought in a thought that we want to challenge the government again on CCACs. Forty cents on every dollar there, we're told, goes to administration and wages, not anywhere close to the front line of care.

This minimum wage is just one way for them to change the channel. They're trying to move people's thought process from what's really happening. They're taking them away from the doubling and tripling of energy rates. They're taking them away from the debt financing that we're paying. They're taking them away from a deficit that this year alone is going to be \$12 billion, and next year they're already predicting it will be \$15 billion. That's \$15 billion in times when we've had record revenues coming into our province.

We're still collecting more, partly because the Liberal government, over their 10-year tenure, has said, "We will not raise your taxes," but the first thing they did is they brought in the health tax, if I recall. I hope the people of

Ontario remember that when it comes back to whenever we get to that election ballot box. That certainly was one of those things—you can do a lot of things, but, at the end of the day, you have to go home, and you have to be able to look in the mirror and say, "Did I do what I said I would do?"

I believe there was a Premier on that side of the House who said in the election, very blatantly, "I will not raise your taxes." The first piece of legislation was the health tax. We will not do that; it's reprehensible. At the very least, that money should have been going back into the health care system to allow it to expand and grow and provide the services to the people paying the freight, not taking it away from them. There are a number of ills under this government that, again, we have major concern with.

In 2003, under the PC government, 3.5% of Ontario workers were on minimum wage. Under the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals, propped up by the spend-DP party, the percentage almost tripled to 9% in 2013. Now, one of the honourable members across the hall was talking about all the wonderful increases. There's an increase that I hope they're not proud of. Similarly, they shouldn't be proud of their increase in doubling the debt, Mr. Speaker. They shouldn't be proud of increasing the cost of hydro two and three and four times. They shouldn't be proud of increasing the debt load—double—in their eight- to 10-year term.

Our economy has barely grown since the Liberals first came into office. They're going to blame it on the recession. They're going to blame it on, probably, Stephen Harper. They definitely will go back to Mike Harris—and who knows beyond that what they'll try to find?—rather than stepping up and saying, "We've made a boondoggle of this. We wasted a billion dollars on gas plants. We wasted a billion dollars on eHealth. We have the Ornge fiasco."

1720

There are a lot of things here that we need to be looking at, and this bill, while it serves a purpose, is certainly not going to be doing a lot of that.

Electricity rates, just in their tenure alone, have gone from 4.3 cents per hour to 12.9 cents per hour. That's basically tripled. Now, how are these people that are on minimum wage and expect more minimum wage going to ever comprehend how they are going to keep up with an energy bill when they are going up within the modest increase that has been proposed? It's a great step, and I'm sure it gives them at least a glimmer that they're going to have a few more shekels in their back pocket, but not with things like energy, which you have no control over, which you have to use in temperatures like this or in our summertime.

The debt-to-GDP, when the Liberals came to power, was 27%; it's now 37%. There's another increase. If you're getting my drift here, I think there's a lot of increases. They are not going into customer service as far as patients in a hospital. They're not giving more people low-income housing that they need. They are not al-

lowing more kids to get into college. In fact, I believe there was a group here last week lobbying against the Liberals because, again, a promise was made: "We will give you your tuition back, 30%." They're telling us, again, "No cheque in the mail." So there's a lot of things here that we really need to be getting the focus of people in Ontario back to.

Talking about minimum wage, and particularly this bill, which really only sets the table to allow minimum-wage increases to come in—it's not saying that a new minimum wage is coming in tomorrow. It's a process bill. It's saying that every couple of years, we'll review it. We'll go through the CPI and we'll appoint, probably, another panel, I would guess. At some point, they'll have some special panel, they'll create some big report to spend \$60,000, \$80,000 or \$100,000 to not listen to, and then they'll come back and tell us that they may review it again. I think we've seen that with the Drummond report. Don Drummond, a very impressive, credentialed man who they hand-picked, I think, brought us a report called—

Mrs. Gila Martow: The Drummond report.

Mr. Bill Walker: Yeah, that's it: the Drummond report. But they pecked away at all the little weaselly things that they could do there, the tweaking-on-the-fringes type of thing.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Have you read it?

Mr. Bill Walker: The minister—I'd like to talk about social services. I know it's your week, but could you just allow me to have my time? Thank you.

Just think of the social services that we could be providing if we weren't spending \$10.3 billion on the deficit, Mr. Minister of Social Services. Think of the people under your direction, how many more people could be being helped, Mr. Minister, if you weren't over there spending more money than you bring in every year, if you actually put plans into action that would give more money back to the people who actually pay the freight.

Mr. Speaker, as I say, we're going to support this bill. My critic from Middlesex has already said that. He's done a good job of this bill. But there are just so many pressing things. I mean, I look at my notes, and there's just so many things on here, I don't even know if I can get into them unless you give me another 20 minutes. There's so many things that need to be repaired.

Not a chance of that, eh, Mr. Speaker? Well, I tried.

Bill 19, the WSIB, the tax on businesses—I talked to a contractor the other day. I was at a benefit, bowling for Big Brothers Big Sisters, and this gentleman said to me that that \$2-an-hour impact to him, he had to eat for six months. And the insurance didn't even cover him fully.

They've once again done that. They brought in the College of Trades. They've taken a fee there that was \$60 for three years, and they have increased that now to \$120 per year plus HST. They've gone out to a multitude of people and they are actually threatening to take their licence away if they don't pay this fee. Most of them are saying to me, "What value do I get for it, MPP Walker?

What am I getting for all that increased taxation? I'm getting less and less and less."

It has to stop at some point. The businesses, when I'm out talking to them—and this is virtually every business person that I talk to—are telling me exactly what I've been trying to say, Mr. Speaker, through you to the House and to those at home listening. They want to see taxes reduced and simplified. They want to make sure that the energy rates are definitely decreased, because that's driving big companies and small companies out of this province at warp speed. The only job creation that I believe is happening in Ontario right now is with moving companies, and that's moving all these people from here to the west, from here to the United States.

By the way, I'm not certain that people at home know, but this Liberal government, supported by the NDP, actually spent half a billion dollars last year, and they didn't give power to the United States and Quebec, to our direct competitors; they actually paid them to take half a billion dollars' worth of money to work against us. Our biggest consumer of power out there, Xstrata Copper, actually shut down their mine because Quebec came across the border and offered them a 50% less rate. So they knock down the factory; they move 670 families over there. We lose our biggest consumer; we lose 670 families contributing to this great economy of Ontario. And we lost the ability of that long-term need to be there forever. That's just one small example.

We've got all those businesses that have been closing in the last little while—Kellogg's, just to name one. It's just crazy. Again, this government stands up with platitudes, but they never say, "You know what? We're actually going to address this. We're going to take action and change things around." Today, I'm here on behalf of businesses that are going to employ those people, that are actually going to pay wages more than the minimum wage.

Most of the self-employed business people I know are quite happy to pay—if they have the ability, because they're not spending so much money on the burden of red tape, spending it on energy bills, spending it on increased taxes. They are happy to give it to their workers. Who creates the value of the product and the service if it's not those great workers? And how do you motivate them? You give them more money. But when this government has their hand in your pocket every time you turn around, more and more and more, you don't have the ability because most of those small businesses that I'm speaking of are running on a shoestring. They're getting to the point of saying, "Why am I even doing this? You're going to increase my workload now from 60 hours a week to 70 or 80. Am I really going to stick with this or am I just going to pack up and move somewhere else?"

Mr. Speaker, we need to remove a lot of these burdens and put the environment back where businesses actually want to remain in Ontario. We want businesses to expand and hire more people in Ontario. We want businesses from outside that haven't even thought about it to come

here. I believe it was our finance critic the other day who said that we're actually having big companies, small companies—any company—bypass Ontario and say, "Why would I even look at Ontario?" We should be the most attractive province to come to in this great Confederation. We always had been until this government took control, with the help of our friends to the left, the NDP. We know what happened under that regime in the Bob Rae days. I'm not certain we ever did recover from that. Surely to goodness, for the sake of my kids and, hopefully someday, grandkids, we never, ever try that again.

I'm having to struggle here with some of the things we're talking about. The Minister of Finance—some are referring to him as the minister of debt—believes they're on the right track. What they're doing is changing the channel: "We'll do some of this type of legislation." They're trying to confuse the public. They're trying to change the channel and get us away from talking about the things that I just brought in: the College of Trades and the new trades tax; rising power rates; higher WSIB premiums; and unsustainable salary and benefit increases in the broader public service. At the end of the day, you wonder where we're going to go with all of this.

Most recently, a study by Meridian Credit Union found that 75% of Ontario's small business owners have no plans to hire next year. That's a sad state of affairs. Between 600,000 to one million people out of work, and 75% of our small businesses—they truly are the heartbeat of our economy. The small, little businesses, like they are in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, are the people who are going to drive our economy. They're the people who are going to ensure that we are the leaders again someday. But when 75% of them are starting to worry because of all the things that I've been laying out here today, it's sad. It really causes me grave concern, particularly for those young people in our next generation.

Some 90% are not expanding, nor are they planning to open another location. Actually, 15%—and I trust that's a low number, given what's happened recently, and probably doesn't include some of those businesses that have already left in the last couple of months.

Mr. Speaker, we need to fundamentally change our approach. We need to get back to a government that sets the ground rules for a thriving economy, allows us to actually create jobs. My leader, Tim Hudak, brought in the Million Jobs Act, which both the Liberals and the NDP voted against. I'm not certain why you would vote against anybody who has a plan to create jobs when you have a million people out of work.

As I've said, we need to create the environment. We need to repatriate companies, to return them to Ontario. Those that have left will come back if we set the table properly, if we create conditions that are inviting, if we create them to ensure that we engage existing businesses to expand, to engage new entrepreneurs to start a business. We need a sign out front that Ontario is open for business. The PCs of Ontario have that sign ready to roll. It will be blue and white: Ontario is open for business. But to do that, we have to get our energy rates down. We

have to ensure that we decrease taxes and we're not coming out with yet another gas tax or health tax, any boondoggle tax or an eHealth tax or an Ornge helicopter tax, because those are all—when you waste a billion dollars on something like a gas plant, just think of those less fortunate people who we're not helping. Think of the \$10.3 billion we're spending on interest payments that is not going to the front lines of our hospitals. They're not creating the innovative schools that we could certainly have if we had that money. We're not attracting new apprentices or skilled trades people, which we could if we had \$10 billion to invest, as opposed to spending and giving it to foreign conglomerates on interest payments.

I will not stand here and be lectured by the Minister of Social Services on anything until he turns his ship around and puts his money where his mouth is for those people on social services who require them, because every day they come into my office, Honourable Minister, asking where mental health services are, where social services are.

1730

So, Mr. Speaker, let's lower the energy rates, let's take out the red tape, let's actually put a jobs plan on the table and, at the end of the day, let's open up Ontario to business again. Let's make sure that these young men and women have hope, have pride and want to stay here in our great community, in our great province. The leader of Confederation will come again under a PC banner; I guarantee it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's always—I don't know what word to describe it. Listening to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound—

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: No, I wouldn't say that. I'd never say that.

But of all the words and phrases and sentences and ideas that this member had, not once did we hear what their plan is for minimum wage. He skirted around all kinds of issues. He talked about a lot of issues in 20 minutes. He must have a really good memory bank for everything he brought up, so I commend him for that. But there is no plan for the minimum wage. What is the PCs' position on minimum wage? Because I'm waiting with bated breath to hear what that is.

The Liberals pushed us: "We need to know your plan. We want to hear what the NDP has to say." And when we gave our plan, we came out with a very measured, responsible response to minimum wage and to what people are facing, because families today—and we've all heard it across this House, that people are feeling squeezed. That's a really good word; they're being squeezed in everyday life in order to pay their bills.

I had someone email our office just recently about the hydro bill. He has five children. One of his children is autistic. His wife works weekends, and he works during the week and overtime as often as he can to try to make ends meet. Here's the clincher, Speaker, and we were

talking about hydro bills: He has been late several times over the last year on paying his hydro bill. The hydro company wants him to pay a \$600 deposit because he has been late, and he has probably been late because of affordability. Things are going up every day. People can't afford to make ends meet.

We need to make sure that we get responsible about the minimum wage, and that hasn't been coming from the Progressive Conservatives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I don't know what planet he's from, but he certainly made quite an impression on me. By the way, we don't intend to take any lectures from a member of that party which, when they were in government, decided they were going to balance the budget on the backs of the poor with their 23% cuts to OW and ODSP, and which downloaded everything onto municipalities and walked away from all of their responsibilities. Maybe you're too young to have any historical perspective—I don't know—but you need to think about that.

By the way, Nathan Stevens of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario said just last week that this proposed \$11 minimum wage is "fair for businesses and fair for workers." So you might want to dwell on that, too.

I learned recently that the federal finance minister, in a meeting with the finance ministers of the various provinces, complimented Ontario for creating more jobs in this province than all the other provinces in Canada together. He also complimented us for being the only provincial government in Canada that met their deficit reduction four years in a row and was leading the country in innovation. Now, that was right before he announced an arbitrary \$1.4-billion cut in transfer payments, so I'm not sure just where he's coming from either.

But the minimum wage at \$11, just for your information, member opposite—someone working 35 hours is now at 98% of the low-income measure on the poverty front. At 37, they're at 103%, and at 40, they're at 107%. I know the member opposite would want to know that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's always great to get up and reply to our great member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who gets a few words in over his 20 minutes. It's hard to keep up with. There are so many good ideas out there that it's unfortunate the other side doesn't want to listen.

Last night, I was down at the mining convention down in Toronto, and we had a chance to meet with a number of students—great education, U of T, McGill University. The problem was, there were no jobs, and they were trying to look for jobs in all areas but the mining sector, which used to be a leader in this province. But between them and the different people who are working in the industry, who were talking about—in Ontario we've fall-

en down; there's no direction on the Ring of Fire. They're waiting, they're hoping—actually, they're hoping for a change of government so they get something going.

But it's that same old story. They're tired of listening to panels. It's time to get out and take action and time to get a huge project that could be our equivalent of the oil sands in Alberta.

If we go back to students, I talked to my son, who couldn't get a job in Ontario and went out to work in Alberta. After a year, he came back on vacation and he came to Toronto, where you'd think, with almost half the population, there would be good jobs here. He met with some of his friends, who were still looking for jobs. These are engineering students. We try to push people through, because we know there should be a lack of that type of skill in this province. They weren't able to get jobs yet. That's a year after they graduated, and I think that's a sad story to tell.

What they're waiting for is a change in government that will get things going. They might have made fun of Mike Harris, but Mike Harris created over a million jobs in this province—1.2 million in eight short years. I think we're desperate. We need that back, and we need to get off, so we're no longer leading the country in the unemployment rate. With 84 consecutive months, I mean, it's certainly a record we are not—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I have to admit, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is able to condense a great amount of material and content in his 20 minutes. I have to applaud him for that. That was quite phenomenal, if anyone paid attention. The amount of actual content he was able to put into his 20 minutes was actually phenomenal, and I have to commend him on that.

I also want to respond to some of the great points he made. He actually talked about some great issues. He talked about the fact that we need to have better mental services, we need to have better services for our less fortunate, we need to have a stronger social network. I was quite surprised—not to be rude, but I was surprised that it was coming from the Progressive Conservatives. I was quite inspired by your concern for the welfare of other people. I didn't expect that to be the thrust of your argument, and I was actually quite happy to hear those concerns. Those are important things and I was quite happy to hear them.

But I have to also raise a point of criticism. We're speaking about the minimum wage. As the member from Beaches-East York really, eloquently got into and expressed, the situation in Ontario is quite dire. It's quite difficult for the people of Ontario who are making minimum wage. I think the member from Beaches-East York talked really personally about his experiences growing up in Regent Park.

We all know all too well that people are in a tough situation and we need to make some serious changes, and we need to take some serious steps to make sure people are brought out of poverty. One of those steps is looking at minimum wage, looking at indexing minimum wage to

CPI or to inflation, and really looking at what we can do as a government to provide some leadership to bring people out of poverty. I think that's something we can all agree on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. We'll return to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'll reverse my order. I'd like to thank my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for the positive, kind things he said. I did cover many points, and I try to do that as much as I can. The sad state is that there are so many concerns that I have to share with the people of Ontario because of the mismanagement of this government.

But you know what? You've hit on a key point. The whole reason Conservatives are here is about the people, to care for the people. One of the key messages we're going to send is we want to cut out the overspending and the waste, so there's more money going back to the front lines, so that those people who are most in need get their care. I thank you very much for that.

My colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry—I like that he mentioned about the jobs in the mining sector, because that brings up a very valid point. Where is the Ring of Fire after 10 years of the Liberal government? Where are those great-paying jobs? I can guarantee you, they won't be minimum wage jobs if the Ring of Fire gets going, and that will have a ripple effect to our whole economy. We'll have wonderful, booming jobs down here and we won't even be talking about minimum wage because we'll have more employment. We won't have to be worrying about this.

1740

I'm going to go to my friend from London–Fanshawe. She said, I think, some nice things about me; I'm not certain there. But she asked about minimum wage. I think the “spend-DP”—what I was hearing out there, unfortunately, was that they've abandoned their base in this debate originally, so I don't know if they should be asking us for our position. But I'll tell you our position, just what I said: We want to create good, full-time, good-paying jobs, as opposed to worrying just about minimum wage only. We want to take a bigger look. We want to be achievers and build a million jobs into this economy, not be cut back to 588,000 because we're overachieving.

She did mention something about a memory bank, so I'm going to bring up just two little things. One would be the Bob Rae days. I'm not certain the people of Ontario will ever forget that, nor will they recover from it, perhaps.

And there were two significant votes by the NDP. One was the first budget I was here for, when they sat on their hands, and the last time was when they stood up unanimously and voted to enable this Liberal government to stay in power, to boondoggle us even more and run us down the debt track.

Finally, to the Minister of Social Services, who doesn't like to listen but likes to talk a fair bit: You mentioned a

balanced budget; I'm not certain you've ever had that in your dialogue before, but I'm glad to see you're starting.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Actually, it's a pleasure to stand up and talk about this very important issue in this House. It's hard to follow that pace, though; it's so frantic and so worried and so desperate. But I'm going to stay focused, actually, on Bill 165. I think that it's important to bring some clarity to this, and I think the member from Beaches–East York earlier did an excellent job.

A person who used to sit on this side of the House for many years was Peter Kormos, and he said that it was so important to actually read the legislation. As a relatively new MPP, I do take the time to go through the legislation.

I do have some concerns, right off the top, that this piece of legislation, under the issue of review—under subsection 10 it says, “Before October 1, 2020, and every five years thereafter, the minister shall cause a review of the minimum wage and the process for adjusting the minimum wage to be commenced.”

If you take that piece of information, I think that everyone should be very concerned that there is the very real possibility that the proposed \$11, tying it to CPI, will actually create a systemic version of poverty in the province if you do not review that figure by 2020. I don't understand why they put it in there, because we should constantly be measuring and talking about what a living wage is in the province of Ontario.

I think it's important to actually review what's in the bill. The minimum wage regulation that the government has put in place to implement their \$11-an-hour minimum wage and other levels for different classes of workers such as students is now official. So it's going to take place. This is going to happen on June 1, 2014, so we're not really debating whether or not it's going to go to \$11. We have a different proposal on the table and I'll talk about that in a few minutes.

What Bill 165 simply does reference—it essentially says that as of October 1, 2014, the annual increase will be equal to the CPI. The first increase using the CPI formula detailed in Bill 165 kicks in on October 1, 2015. And as the member from Beaches–East York mentioned earlier, right now it's about 1%. So I think that while our plan offers some predictability, which is what we heard from small and medium-sized enterprises across the province, this 1% is certainly concerning.

This debate this afternoon has been very long and very drawn-out. It's been very interesting, though, to hear the level of comments that have come from the Liberal side of the House, the Liberal government, especially directed towards our leader. I want to address it because I think that it's a slippery slope, and I'm really happy that the Speaker did address it four times, when members were mentioning our leader, Andrea Horwath, by name, in a very disrespectful way. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for pulling them back.

But it must be in the message box some place on that side of the House. It's so consistent. I mean, these things don't happen by accident. A lot of things do happen by accident in this House, and actually, that reminds me: This weekend, Thomas Mulcair addressed our provincial council, and he said he warned Canadians about Liberals in this country. He said, "Liberals flash left but turn right and cause accidents," and I think that that's generally a feeling that people are having about where we are in the country.

But the level of disrespect that I heard earlier clearly reveals a level of insecurity, and the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton earlier encouraged the Liberals to not feel so insecure. Dig deep and remember that they are the government for the time being, and perhaps instead of deflecting their own insecurity back to the third party, they should own their policies.

I just want to take a second—just a second—because it's such a different strategy that the parties have embraced with regard not only to poverty reduction but to the economy, when the two issues are obviously connected. In 2012, we came into this House as the first minority government in many, many years, although I'm pretty sure at the time the Liberals didn't refer to themselves as a minority: It was a major minority or a minor majority or what have you. But we brought to that first budget session a commitment to stabilize child care, which has been neglected for so many years. It's a bit embarrassing, actually, that the province of Ontario does not have a strong social fabric to support children and families, and, of course, recognizing that for every dollar you do invest in child care, the return on investment is very strong. It's also a very key issue around equality. As we move towards International Women's Day, I think that it's important to recognize that the funding that we negotiated in that budget significantly and positively impacted the lives of Ontarians, and actually municipalities have seen that funding in this last budget round. Even the region of Waterloo was so pleased to see that there was actually some funding for child care and that it's now going to be annualized. That's something that we can actually be very proud of. We negotiated it in 2012—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: There's really no guarantee that you would have done it anyway.

Quite honestly, we had to do it because the Liberal government backpedalled on their plan to do the extended day from the Pascal report, which he recommended, and it has been successful in some school boards—my own, actually, Waterloo Region District School Board.

So the 2012 child care funding, which I think was \$65 million at the time, but my colleague may correct me—we did that. Then, the fairness tax: What a novel concept. For those people who make over half a million dollars, they are going to pay 2% more, which would generate revenue so we can refocus our attention to some of those priority areas that we see in the province of Ontario—2%. Actually, I don't know too many people who make over half a million dollars, but I'm pretty sure that they can afford it. You know what some people do say? "You

know, it's okay, collect the taxes, but spend them responsibly, put them to good use."

In 2013, on the same issue of strengthening the economy, the NDP actually came to the table and ensured that some long-standing promises came to the fore, primarily, of course, youth employment. Youth unemployment is a huge issue in the province of Ontario. We have one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in the country. So we negotiated a jobs experience program to ensure that youth have an opportunity to gain those experiential learning opportunities in the workplace. To date, I think that we're seeing some slow progress on that, but there's a lot more work to do.

We have been focused on affordability, and that's why we did champion the issue of the auto insurance rates. In 2010, when Dwight Duncan stood up in this House and said, "We are going to change the way that benefits are paid out. This will streamline the auto insurance industry and those savings will automatically get passed on to drivers"—when that didn't happen, we saw that as ultimately an issue of fairness. We saw that as an issue of fairness, but also an issue of affordability.

Then, of course, the health care file. I think that we can all agree that the health care file is a little messy. We've had a number of scandals, time and time and time again, which have pulled money out of the system and away from the people that we should be focused on. So we negotiated that five-day home care guarantee; it was said that was going to happen. So—

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member from Ottawa-Orléans on a point of order.

Mr. Phil McNeely: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member should be speaking to the minimum wage act, and we're going all over the place. I'd like her to focus on the minimum wage act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Well, I've heard the member talk about minimum wage. Again, I would remind all members that we need to bring our comments back to the subject at hand. We're debating the minimum wage bill, Bill 165.

I return to the member for Kitchener-Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Affordability obviously is connected to the minimum wage. The economics of this province are obviously connected to minimum wage. The rates for child care workers in the province of Ontario are connected, unfortunately, to minimum wage. For those people who are working in the home care sector, obviously—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, the personal support workers who had to walk out over the Christmas holidays, who are fighting for a livable wage—that's connected to minimum wage.

Finally, it really does actually come down to priorities. When we were able to ensure or to at least make sure that the Liberals pursued the issue of closing corporate tax loopholes to the tune of \$1.4 billion, that does come down to affordability, and it comes down to reprioritizing how tax dollars are spent. Why should corporations have

these corporate tax giveaways, no strings attached? It has not proven to be successful to create jobs. Instead, we've had this long, prolonged sort of period of inaction on poverty reduction. So it is all connected. A livable wage, a strong economy and reducing poverty in the province of Ontario are absolutely connected—as with those people who are on ODSP, who actually want to work, but don't want to get penalized for going out into the workforce and subsidizing what is a very low rate of compensation.

Finally, it all does come to accountability. Sometimes we can agree on financial accountability and transparency. I'm so pleased that we finally finished the interviews for the Financial Accountability Officer. It is only nine and a half months later. We did want to hire a Financial Accountability Officer; we did not want to give birth to one nine and a half months later, but it will happen. We will have an officer of this Legislature who will be able to ensure, as we move forward with financial decisions—perhaps like the minimum wage, just to speak to the bill—that we are making the right decisions, to ensure that research and facts impact policy and legislation and, hopefully, remove some of the very overly partisan decisions that have been made over this term of the Legislature. I'm not going to go through the long list of gas plant stuff because it becomes tiresome. It does become tiresome.

But going forward, as Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, comes to the fore and for a vote, I think it behooves us—we actually have a responsibility to ensure that we also call for immediate action on public sector CEO salaries and management bonuses. You can't have a balanced conversation about what the hard-working folks in this province who will be making \$11 but perhaps, in the future, under an NDP plan, will be making \$11.50 and \$12 by 2015-16—if that does happen, clearly that will make a huge difference to those who struggle to make ends meet day in and day out, but I think you also have to find some justice for them. We certainly define justice as addressing those public sector CEO salaries and management bonuses. The latest example, quite honestly, is quite astounding. For the CEO of the Pan Am Games to be earning an annual salary of \$450,000—that's a good salary. It's a privilege to serve the public and the public sector. It used to be an honourable profession, that people sought out positions to serve the public, to make this province a great province. Nobody, in days gone by, would expect a \$780,000 bonus just for sticking around and doing the job that you agreed to do in the first place. It really is insulting to those people who are working for minimum wage.

We need to crack down on corporate tax avoidance as well. The Auditor General's 2010 finding was that the Ontario government had left over \$2.4 billion in corporate taxes uncollected while laying off tax enforcement agents. It goes back to a fundamental level of respect for

the citizens of this province, Mr. Speaker. For those people who are paying their taxes day in and day out and are trying to hold us accountable, as they should—every party. For large corporations to find these havens and for us to not address that is, quite honestly, irresponsible.

As I've already mentioned, the closing of the planned new corporate tax loopholes worth \$1.1 billion annually—the last time I checked, that was a lot of money. I could go towards a very progressive transit plan, which was left out of the original poverty reduction strategy. I attended the first meeting some five years ago and transit was a huge issue in the city—and also the lack of connection pieces with the rest of the province. Any transit strategy going forward needs to take the entire province into account.

I think that the plan that we have put forward—and I'm hopeful in this minority setting that the Liberal government may actually pay attention to it. Our plan is balanced, beginning with 50-cent increases; it's predictable. You get to \$12 and then you tie it to CPI. In 2011 our platform was \$11.

It was very interesting to see the media response to our announcement on the minimum wage. They expect us to be reactionary and to be overly emotional. They didn't expect us to come out with a pragmatic and balanced plan. We did consult, but we don't just consult for the sake of consulting; when we consult, we actually listen—active listening. I think that the plan we have put forward is balanced, it is pragmatic, it is respectful of the people who are going to be earning a minimum wage and it's also respectful of those small and medium-sized enterprises that have quite honestly said to us, "Just give us something predictable." That is what we have done.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a pleasure to stand up and talk about this important issue. I've connected the economy and the health of our economy as a province. We have addressed the minimum wage and then, quite honestly, I've used the opportunity to clearly separate ourselves from some of the strategies that some of the parties in this House have adopted. I think we all have a responsibility to come to this place and do the hard work of a minority government. By all accounts, we will have a minority government going forward, so we're going to have to actually adapt.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The pundits say that there will be minority governments going forward, so sitting on the sidelines and heckling for a living is not in the interests of the people of this province. I think that it is our responsibility to try to make it work and to at least read a budget.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being very close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzdiecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzdiecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Continued from back cover

Violence Awareness and Random Acts of Kindness program	
Mr. Todd Smith	5581
Women in skilled trades	
Mr. Taras Natyshak	5582
Community Design Night	
Ms. Dipika Damerla	5582
Epilepsy Awareness Month	
Mrs. Christine Elliott	5582
Full Circle child care centre	
Mr. Michael Prue	5583
Events in Venezuela	
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5583
Community care access centres	
Ms. Sylvia Jones	5583

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Social workers	
Hon. Ted McMeekin	5584
Greenbelt	
Hon. Linda Jeffrey	5584
Social workers	
Mr. Rod Jackson	5585
Greenbelt	
Mr. Michael Harris	5586
Greenbelt	
Ms. Cindy Forster	5586
Social workers	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	5586

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Cystic fibrosis	
Mr. Jim Wilson	5587
Off-road vehicles	
Mr. John Vanthof	5587
Lyme disease	
Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette	5587
Off-road vehicles	
Mr. Percy Hatfield	5588
Use of digital technologies	
Mr. Shafiq Qadri	5588
Cystic fibrosis	
Mr. Steve Clark	5588

Ontario College of Trades	
Mr. Bill Walker	5588
Office of the Ombudsman	
Miss Monique Taylor	5589
Use of digital technologies	
Mr. Shafiq Qadri	5589
Air quality	
Mr. Monte McNaughton	5589
Ontario Drug Benefit Program	
Mr. Taras Natyshak	5589
Environmental protection	
Mr. Joe Dickson	5590
Diabetes	
Mr. Jim McDonell	5590

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014, Bill 165, Mr. Naqvi / Loi de 2014 pour un salaire minimum équitable, projet de loi 165, M. Naqvi	
Mr. Monte McNaughton	5590
Mr. Percy Hatfield	5597
Mr. Shafiq Qadri	5598
Mr. Bill Walker	5598
Mr. John Vanthof	5599
Mr. Monte McNaughton	5599
Mr. Taras Natyshak	5599
Mr. Toby Barrett	5605
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5605
Mr. Bob Delaney	5606
Mr. Jim McDonell	5606
Mr. Taras Natyshak	5606
Royal assent / Sanction royale	
The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott)	5607
Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014, Bill 165, Mr. Naqvi / Loi de 2014 pour un salaire minimum équitable, projet de loi 165, M. Naqvi	
Mr. Shafiq Qadri	5607
Mr. Jim McDonell	5608
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5608
Mr. Bill Mauro	5609
Mr. Bill Walker	5609
Mr. Shafiq Qadri	5610
Mr. Steve Clark	5610
Ms. Catherine Fife	5613
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5613
Mr. Bill Walker	5613
Mr. Michael Prue	5614

Mr. Steve Clark.....	5614
Mr. Michael Prue.....	5614
Mr. Bill Mauro.....	5617
Mr. Bill Walker.....	5617
Ms. Catherine Fife	5617
Hon. Yasir Naqvi.....	5618
Mr. Michael Prue.....	5618
Mr. Bill Walker.....	5618
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	5622
Hon. Ted McMeekin.....	5623
Mr. Jim McDonell	5623
Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	5623
Mr. Bill Walker.....	5624
Ms. Catherine Fife	5624
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	5626

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 3 March 2014 / Lundi 3 mars 2014

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5569
Mr. Joe Dickson	5569
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5569
M. Gilles Bisson.....	5569
Hon. Mario Sergio.....	5569
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	5569
Mme France Gélinas	5569
Hon. Michael Coteau	5569
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	5569
Hon. Reza Moridi.....	5569
Hon. Charles Sousa	5569
Hon. Ted McMeekin	5569
Mr. Frank Klees	5569
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	5570
Hon. Brad Duguid	5570
Mr. Frank Klees	5570
Hon. Michael Gravelle	5570
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	5570

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Health care

Mr. Jim Wilson	5570
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5570
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	5570
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	5570

Minister's comments

Mr. Todd Smith.....	5571
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5571
Mrs. Gila Martow.....	5572
Hon. Michael Chan	5572

Hydro rates

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5572
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5572

Hydro rates

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5573
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5573

Pan Am Games

Mr. Rod Jackson	5573
Hon. Michael Chan	5573

Hydro rates

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	5574
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5574

Mining industry

Mr. Steven Del Duca.....	5574
Hon. Michael Gravelle	5574

Seniors' health services

Mr. Frank Klees	5575
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5575

Community care access centres

Mme France Gélinas	5576
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5576

Aboriginal affairs

Ms. Mitzie Hunter	5576
Hon. David Zimmer	5576

Power plants

Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	5577
Hon. John Milloy	5577

Hydro rates

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	5578
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5578

Research and innovation

Mr. Bas Balkissoon	5578
Hon. Reza Moridi.....	5578

Wind turbines

Ms. Laurie Scott.....	5579
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5579

Accessibility for the disabled

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	5579
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5579

Visitors

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	5580
-------------------------	------

Member's privilege

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	5580
-------------------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Food literacy

Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....	5581
-------------------------	------

Bowl for Kids Sake

Mr. Steven Del Duca.....	5581
--------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

A20N
X1
D23



No. 109

N° 109

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 4 March 2014

Mardi 4 mars 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 4 March 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 4 mars 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILD CARE MODERNIZATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA MODERNISATION DES SERVICES DE GARDE D'ENFANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 20, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 143, An Act to enact the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2013, to repeal the Day Nurseries Act, to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 and the Education Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 143, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur la garde d'enfants et la petite enfance, abrogeant la Loi sur les garderies, modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les éducatrices et les éducateurs de la petite enfance et la Loi sur l'éducation et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member from Kitchener—Cambridge, sorry.

Mr. Rob Leone: Make sure you get that right, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've been admonished.

Mr. Rob Leone: We, in Cambridge, don't like to be called from Kitchener, you know, so it's a little bit of a different thing.

I'm pleased to resume debate on Bill 143, the Child Care Modernization Act, in this Legislature. I left off talking about some of the challenges I think this legislation presents to folks in the child care sector. I believe I left off by talking about some of our child care providers who are stay-at-home parents who want to raise their kids, and in order to do that in their own home environment, they are actually taking on some extra kids. It's making that choice to stay at home for those parents a more viable option. I think we have to seriously consider that aspect, where child care providers in the province of Ontario are making certain choices about the kind of work that they want.

I want to also suggest that we have to consider the trust that's built between the child care provider and the parent. Certainly, we have to recognize that this is an important bond.

We've received countless emails on this particular piece of legislation. As I've stated previously in this debate, there hasn't been a piece of legislation that I think has received as much attention as this particular one, Bill 143. I think that's a good thing, because talking about how our children should be cared for is certainly one of a parent's most important considerations on an ongoing basis.

In the course of looking at what position we should take on this legislation, I've decided that I would consult widely. I've attended many forums; I've solicited meetings, and others have solicited myself. I've received countless emails, as I mentioned, and made phone calls. As I was walking around the riding on the weekend, I think there were at least three occasions where folks came up to talk about this particular piece of legislation. I think that's a good thing as well, that people are aware that we are debating these things.

One multi-site child care provider in my region has offered a lot of feedback on the proposed legislation. I'm sure this is going to make its way to the minister's office at some point if it hasn't already. But there are a number of concerns that they have raised, three of which I'm going to talk about right now. One is that the ministry will be mandating before- and after-care. There needs to be more clarity on what that will look like. I know that certainly that has been a question and a concern that a lot of child care providers in Waterloo region have had recently. My first piece of legislation in this House related to the effect that we have to do our best to protect third-party providers. But who does that before- and after-care, what the rules are around that, certainly needs to be clarified and parsed out.

Another concern that they raised is cost, and the question for them is that if they're trying to remain competitive in this environment, how are they going to make sure that they are as efficient and as lean as possible? Their perspective and the difficulty that's raised by this is that it's extremely difficult to bring down their costs. One of the only areas where that can happen is that staff will actually earn less, and that's certainly an argument that was being made. We have to recognize that through the course of providing child care—women are predominantly child care providers, and if this is a question of them earning less because of the efficiencies that are created, there are certain concerns that are raised about that.

There are currently thousands of unlicensed child care providers. I know this bill provides for more inspections to those informal care settings. The question is, who's actually going to perform those inspections? What infra-

structure is in place? I know that the history of providing and producing these inspections isn't necessarily great. Even the complaints that the government receives to date—they're having a hard time making sure that those inspections are done in an appropriate fashion, if at all. I know media reports stated during the course of last summer, particularly when the *Toronto Star* was doing an analysis of this bill and of child care in Ontario—many, many cases that were provided to the ministry had gone uninvestigated or they weren't investigated properly or thoroughly. So the only way that you can actually do that is if you have more inspectors. Well, if that's the case, then we're going to be spending more on child care while actually providing less child care. We're spending more on inspectors and the whole regime behind that without actually increasing the number of child care spaces. I think that many people in the sector would say that if there's extra money in child care, we should be reducing the cost for families, and that's an important consideration that folks would like to make.

I've stated on an ongoing basis that in urban Ontario and rural Ontario, there are two different scenarios. The availability of child care, the viability of child care in rural Ontario is certainly a concern for our caucus, and members who represent rural Ontario are certainly in a position to make those arguments persuasively. I don't live in the city of Cambridge; I live in the township that's attached to my riding, and child care is difficult to find. You actually can't find a licensed child care facility in the vicinity of where we live, so we actually drive our child to the city to get the child care that he needs. So we have to consider that there are challenges, particularly in rural Ontario, and we're very concerned about the viability of child care once these new rules are enacted.

I met with a group of early childhood educators who had a forum on both the legislation, Bill 143, and on the regulations that the ministry has changed or proposed to change. It was one of the most fascinating meetings that I have attended, because you really got a sense of what was happening on the ground and what people thought about the rules that we are creating here in this Legislature. I think it was just a very worthwhile endeavour. I would encourage all members of the Legislature, if they have forums in their ridings or in their area, to attend those forums, because it's very important to understand what's going on on the ground and what their feelings are about the changes that are being made.

One concern that was predominant in that meeting and in almost every meeting where I talked with child care providers was the fact that there was a perceived conflict of interest that's created. We have the region that is going to be the licensee—or a municipality that is the licensee. We have the municipality that's also a child care provider. We have the municipality that's also going to be the one that could potentially take your licence away. In effect, your competitor is judging whether you can provide child care in a particular area or not. That's a challenge that any business person who wants to get in the field would have to overcome, and I think it's a serious

conflict of interest that needs to be rectified. How can, effectively, the one body be a provider and the judge and jury of all the other child care in the area is certainly something we need to come to grips with, with this particular piece of legislation.

0910

Recently, a number of emails that have come through have come from a variety of sources, particularly related to what's happening with private schools. I know that there are some challenges with respect to private schools and the disparity between what happens with grandfathered private school centres, those that aren't grandfathered and those that the Day Nurseries Act actually applies to. Their concern—the ones that are grandfathered, and I think it's a concern that we should consider—is that we should probably, if we're going to create these new rules and we're asking those grandfathered institutions to abide by those new rules, have some time period of compliance. I think that would mitigate some of the financial concern that these private schools who are providing early childhood education might have with a particular piece of legislation. Incorporating some way of managing the fiscal impact that a centre would have to provide with fire and safety, with upgrades on the premises—that alone would cost a lot of money. I think we owe them at least that, to consider a lead time.

From that sector, I think one of the most consistent messages that we are hearing right now is this approach to common and consistent pedagogy. I know that I had a delegation from our Montessori schools, who are very concerned about the fact that we are having a common, consistent approach to pedagogy, which means that every child care centre will be doing the same thing. Well, the nature of private business is to offer something different, to offer something that might be a little different than the person next door, to offer programming and an environment that might be different. This is a big concern not just to Montessori schools, but there are also other schools that are concerned about the fact that, if there are child development experts which you're modelling your child care centre after—the fact that you have to have a common and consistent approach to pedagogy is of great concern to them. This is, again, about the business model and the business decisions people make and the models they want to follow. Having a common and consistent approach negates innovation in the child care sector that we have to be concerned about.

I think we have to look in a very finite way. This also applies to the provision that we need early childhood educators in our classrooms. Now, I'm not familiar with the Montessori model. My family doesn't use a Montessori school. But I reckon that the Montessori model does have a certain series of standards and approaches that they have to consider in order to be able to use the Montessori brand. I know that the education that those providers of early childhood education at Montessori schools also go through—a rigorous program to be able to run a classroom and facility. This bill, effectively, does not even consider that as a potential viable option. I'm not an

expert on the different models of early childhood education and whether Montessori education is superior or inferior to what's happening in our colleges or universities in terms of early childhood education, but I think there are concerns that we need to recognize, and there are approaches to early childhood education that vary from place to place.

I do want to talk a little about some of the feedback that we've received from parents and providers across this great province. Anyways, I'll just go through some of the ones that I've highlighted here. For example, I've received this letter from Heather dated December 11, 2013, that makes the following claim, that "there is already an insufficient amount of child care for children under two years of age that's available. The proposal that home child care providers may care for no more than two children under the age of two years will cause a major reduction in the number of child care spaces available for toddlers" under the age of two.

I know that there are reasons and a rationale behind limiting the number of kids under two, but are we really going to go down the path of limiting and reducing the number of spaces allocated to child care in the province of Ontario by enacting this particular piece of legislation? I think we have to seriously consider the effects of that.

She continues: "What this act will do is take choice away from parents regarding the type of child care available to them. It will limit the number of available spaces for care for children less than two years of age. It will make child care more expensive. It will inadequately address safety provisions. It will punish many well-run businesses for the flaws of a few poorly run businesses which were not properly penalized for infractions. It will put many hard-working, conscientious home care providers out of work."

And she goes on to say, "In my opinion, this act was not thoroughly thought out regarding its far-reaching effects on today's families, on my own family."

I think that we have to consider those comments in light of what people on the ground are feeling about this particular piece of legislation. You're taking choice away from parents.

Creating uniformity does not provide that choice—eliminating the number of spaces for children under the age of two. If there's no corresponding plan to increase or improve the spaces available to these children, we are potentially going to create, with this particular piece of legislation, a shortage of child care in the province of Ontario, and that concerns me greatly.

Kimberley writes, on December 11 as well, many different things. She's an independent professional home care provider in Ottawa. She states that she has "a university degree in biology and environmental science." Those are her words. "Growing up, the thought of working as a child care provider had never crossed my mind. After seeing the conditions in 'good' licensed daycare centres and home daycares affiliated with licensed agencies, my only option was to open my own home daycare if I wanted to earn a living and know my

child was safe, happy and loved. I was very fortunate to have the invaluable support of the CCPRN (the Child Care Providers Resource Network) while I set up my business. They support all caregivers, including stay-at-home parents, nannies, ECEs and professional home child care providers like myself, whether we are affiliated with an agency or not. They provide workshops regarding child safety, education and development, as well as business information. Thanks to the CCPRN, Ottawa likely has the best quality of independent home child care providers in Canada."

She goes on: "It has been six years since my first daycare child 'joined' our family, and it seems I've found my calling. I am not a babysitter. I provide a standard of care far above any centre or standard required by a child care agency. My daycare kids receive wholesome fresh foods, quality programming based on themes, friendship and love in a safe family setting in their own neighbourhood. Their parents have the peace of mind that their kids are truly safe and happy with me and feel secure working with me to help their children grow into bright, strong, secure kids that are prepared for school when the time comes."

She goes on to say, "I am appalled at the attitude of the Liberal government towards the safety of our children. To ensure safe, quality care for all children, we must first seek out the very best caregivers. Is it that our children don't matter? Does the work caring for our most vulnerable not deserve reasonable pay or recognition? The proposed Child Care Modernization Act does nothing to address this problem. In reality, it will make it impossible to operate a home daycare legally as a sustainable business."

She goes on: "My daycare is open 50 hours a week. I work another five to 10 hours a week cleaning, cooking and preparing learning materials for the daycare. If I have five full-time kids in care, I'm making an acceptable income. If I drop to three full-time kids, I have to dip into savings to pay my bills."

Mr. Speaker, I think we have to be very careful about what we're doing with this particular piece of legislation.

Let's talk about Laura, who wrote to me on December 12:

"To whom it may concern,

"I am writing this email with regard to Bill 143. I'm a parent of an 11-month-old who is currently within an at-home daycare provider from Monday to Friday. This provider has done a wonderful job making myself, as a first-time parent, feel 100% comfortable leaving my child with her. The atmosphere of the daycare is amazing. You truly feel like you are in a classroom with all the books and cubbies with their names on them and the schedule they have for growth and development. I was sad to find out about this bill and what could potentially happen to the providers out there, not just ours. I do understand that there have been unfortunate situations where children have been injured or worse, although unfortunate situations happen at home sometimes as well. I believe that as a parent, you should take the time to educate yourself on your provider for your children's safety.

0920

"When it comes to public daycares I do not believe they have the best quality of care for children and with this bill there will be many private providers who will have to increase the cost per day which will then not be realistic for most parents to afford to have their children within the best care. As a first-time parent I was blown away at the cost of public daycare and personally if I did not have my daycare provider that I do I would not have been able to go back to work due to not being able to afford the cost. I do know there is assistance for the cost 'should we meet the criteria' although most families do not meet those criteria, mine included."

Then there's Valerie, who wrote to me on January 28. She says:

"I provide daycare for two children of friends who wanted to place their children with someone they knew and trusted. They did not want their children in a daycare centre. These parents enjoy that I only care for a small group of children at a time. I also provide the only French-speaking daycare in my region. I offer mostly homemade meals made with organic and local ingredients. I also accept cloth diapers. I have a university degree in psychology and previously worked as a child and youth worker for the children's aid society. I am very qualified to run an unlicensed home daycare. I am therefore able to charge a premium fee for my services so that I can afford to stay at home to raise my children.

"However, I do not think it would be feasible for me to continue this form of employment based on the amendments this government is proposing. First off, I would no longer earn enough money. The agency would take part of my pay. I would no longer be able to receive the premium I charge for offering different services. I would not increase the amount of children I have in my care in order to make more money, because that would negatively affect the care my children would receive. Also, being licensed with an agency would not be worth the paperwork headache."

So, Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker, now—I wanted to raise those issues because parents are coming to us with these heart-wrenching stories about the care and what this bill is going to mean to them. I don't think we can take their concerns lightly. We have to take pause about what they're saying on an ongoing basis. We're talking about choice; we're talking about a heart-wrenching decision to leave children in the care of another person, and that can only happen when you actually trust the provider that you are sending your kid to, and that trust comes in many forms. That trust may be a setting that isn't in a public setting. It may be in a home in a neighbourhood. The connotation of having a child in a strip mall or at a school at the age of 13 months or 14 months is not acceptable to a lot of families. They want their children in the care and comfort of a home environment with other kids, with other children, where they know that their child is going to be loved and nurtured. Madam Speaker, I think we have to take a look at what this legislation is doing to families right across this province. This is a fun-

damental decision that parents make, one that we can't take lightly.

Ultimately, I think we have to understand that choice is paramount. What I choose may not necessarily be what other people will choose. As I made mention earlier in my previous remarks on this particular piece of legislation, my family did choose a non-profit child care centre for our kids, but that's not the choice that I know the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke had made for his kids, and I know that he is probably going to comment on that choice when he gets to debate this particular piece of legislation.

If we're really interested in increasing the number of licensed spaces in daycare, I think we have a number of things that we could do rather than pursue this bill. The red tape involved in starting up a licensed child care centre in the province of Ontario is too cumbersome. It takes two years to actually start a licensed child care centre. The thought that these home care providers, who are independent business owners, have to then become an employee of an agency in order to provide licensed child care in the province is too much to stomach for a lot of these young families who are entrepreneurs. The rule stipulating a common pedagogical approach to providing the care for these kids also is too much for many of these child care providers to take.

So I say, Madam Speaker, that we have to focus religiously on safety. It's undetermined whether this bill will actually improve safety. I think it goes some ways in doing that. We need to protect choice. I think this bill has a negative effect on that choice, particularly if it's trying to treat all child care providers equally. We have to look at affordability and the number of spaces available. Again, this bill significantly alters both of those particular aspects that we need to consider. I think we have a lot more work to do on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on the member from Cambridge's analysis of Bill 143. It's somewhat ironic too, because he referenced the issue that we dealt with in Waterloo, where we actually tried to follow through on the original plan that was put forward by the Liberal government to create a seamless day of child care around our current infrastructure, which is our schools. To date, actually, that has been incredibly successful, creating 1,600 child care spaces at no cost to the taxpayer, and it would have been an amazing program, but the Liberal government backed off on that because of the pressure of third-party operators. I want to say, I totally understand where the third-party operators were coming from, because child care has been destabilized. There is no solid infrastructure for child care in the province of Ontario, which is why we have a shortage of spaces, and which is why parents are resorting, in some instances—and some tragic instances—to unsafe, unlicensed home care situations which, devastatingly, has resulted in four deaths of children in the province of Ontario.

I would completely concur with his comments, though, that this is about trust. If that's the question, if the question is actually, "How are we going to create more quality, accessible, affordable and safe child care in the province of Ontario?", unfortunately, Bill 143 does not get to that issue. It does modernize the Day Nurseries Act, and the Day Nurseries Act needed to be updated because there were some serious issues with that piece of legislation. But when you listen to the informed voices on this issue, their primary concern, their two big questions, are (1) "How will this affect operator viability?" and (2) "How will this affect health, safety and well-being of children who are in those centres?" Those are two outstanding questions. We'll get to committee. We'll try to address those.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to respond to the member from Cambridge. I just wanted to recognize that Andrea Calver from the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care has joined us in the gallery.

I wanted to start by setting a little bit of context here. When we introduced full-day kindergarten, there was actually a broader plan around that. We said we're going to have full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds. That will be completed this September. Where schools have full-day kindergarten, they must also, if parents request it in sufficient numbers, have before- and after-care. As the member from Kitchener-Waterloo noted, some boards have opted to do that directly. Many boards have opted to do that through third-party operators. But the bottom line is that 62% of schools that already have FDK at parent request also have before- and after-care, and that number goes up each and every year.

That leaves the issue of before- and after-care for six- to 12-year-olds, and some form of programming being made available is included in this bill. Then the other piece is, how do you address the viability of the operators that remain in the community? In many cases, they've had the kids that were four- and five-year-olds move on to FDK, and there's a separate initiative, which is a regulation under the current Day Nurseries Act, looking at trying to improve the viability for those operators who remain in the community. So there's quite a range of things that are going on here. It's important to understand them all.

The member mentioned rural child care, and that's really related to the regulation. I will—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is a pleasure to comment on my colleague from Cambridge's speech earlier in the day. He actually mentioned me, so I thought I'd better at least respond in some way. He is right that there are some concerns with safety in some of the institutions and some of the people offering daycare today.

0930

Our experience has been that that choice was so important. Early on, we were both working, and our

children were babysat in Barry's Bay by Maryann Yarascavitch. We couldn't have asked for better. We moved to Wilno a couple years later, when Zachary was five, Heidi was three, and Emily and Lucas were not yet born. From the time we were in Wilno, our neighbour Georgine Lorbetskie looked after the children when we weren't there. I'll tell you, we could not have found any better daycare on the face of the earth. Georgine took such a tremendous interest in the kids; it was unbelievable. Sometimes we almost felt guilty that they got better care from Georgine than they got from us. It was just that she had that much love and interest in their upbringing and their welfare. My daughter Emily is probably going to be mad if I mention this, but Georgine took it upon herself—because she had to start the process—and I think she had Emily trained shortly after her second birthday. That's pretty darn good, and it's just because she was such an interested and attentive caregiver.

So the question of choice—and was she licensed? No, she was our neighbour. We lived next door. How convenient is that, to get the best daycare in the world and you only have to walk your children over to the next house? We were very fortunate in that regard, and we're very thankful for the assistance that Georgine provided. We were more than neighbours; we were friends. To have somebody like that—or maybe not to be able to have somebody like that because they would have to go through a licensing process, would be something that I would think would be unfair. We have to look at this whole situation, and make sure that choice is available and that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm really happy to speak today to Bill 143 and also welcome Andrea Calver from the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care to the Legislature.

This is a debate that we need to have in Ontario when it comes to child care. When I speak to residents in my community, we have younger people moving into our neighbourhoods, people who need child care. Quite frankly, when I speak to people, they have no idea how they are going to pay those bills. So it baffles me that it has taken this long to start to debate these issues here.

What I do hear from the government, unfortunately, at times, as boasts—I hear ministers here, on the government side, speak about how they've spent the least per capita, the smallest investment per capita, of any province in Canada in our social programs, and we pay that price in our communities. When we look at how we are going to reduce poverty in this province, the best anti-poverty program we could ever imagine would be an affordable child care system. This bill does not speak to this issue. In fact, this bill is increasing child care spaces only by lessening the regulations, saying that it's okay to have more kids in care. It is kind of unthinkable that this would happen at the very same time that we continue to see kids die in child care. As somebody who is expecting my first child this month—

Applause.

Mr. Jonah Schein:—thank you—I couldn't be more excited for what's about to happen but also more terrified. We have one year to figure this out. Who is going to take care of this child that we already love so much? To think that there just aren't choices available for where that child is going to be safe and where we can actually afford to get the care that we need—every family deserves that child care.

If we look to Quebec, we know that we can have a publicly funded child care system that puts families first and lets people go back to work and have good care for their children.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Cambridge has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rob Leone: I want to thank the members from Kitchener Centre, Renfrew–Nipissing—sorry, Kitchener–Waterloo; I made the mistake to you as was made to me—Kitchener–Waterloo, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Davenport. I want to also thank the Minister of Education for taking the time to listen to debate on Bill 143. I think it is important that the minister listen to the concerns that we are going to raise, concerns that—in four minutes, I've heard the NDP echo some of the concerns that we've made, and we have added to those.

I think viability and cost are certainly very important questions in our child care system, ones that we have to come to grips with. There are no easy solutions. I think that there are, actually, a lot of difficult solutions and decisions that need to be made.

But what I want to restate in the minute that I have left is that we have to be, obviously, unapologetically in favour of child safety. That is a very important aspect of our approach to this piece of legislation. I don't want it to seem that by making the suggestions that we're making, safety isn't a concern to us, because it very much is.

But we are also concerned about choice, about affordability and availability of child care that this bill certainly challenges. I think that we owe it to our constituents to have a thorough debate on this particular issue. It's not going to go away.

I know full-day kindergarten, as the member for Kitchener–Waterloo stated, challenged the business model of child care in Ontario. It did so in a very huge way that we have yet to really consider, just because the business model of child care relied upon providing care for four- and five-year-olds that no longer is there. Now this bill is talking about what we're going to do with six- to 12-year-olds in addition to four- and five-year-olds. These are challenges that we have to come to grips with.

We have to ensure that there are spaces available and these businesses are run properly.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to discuss this bill, and, as my colleagues have acknowledged, to welcome Andrea Calver here. She and the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care have been, well, I guess "relentless" is a fair word, in the work they've done to try and improve the situation of children,

of parents and of child care providers in this province. I have a number of points that were raised by the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care that I want to address this morning in my speech.

As you are well aware, Speaker, and as everyone in this House is well aware, families in Ontario feel squeezed. They feel squeezed because, in fact, they are being squeezed. One of the most significant pressures facing young families is the cost and availability of child care. Parents get frantic about finding a waiting list that's open and is not 10 years long. They are concerned about the cost because, frankly, at going rates of \$1,000 and up per month per child, if you've got two or three children in care, you are paying an extraordinary amount of money. And they worry about the safety of their children. There's no getting around it. We have seen deaths in child care provider situations—and I'll address that further as we go in—but, certainly, every time a parent opens a newspaper and sees the death of a child in care, that parent is profoundly shaken. Even if they have confidence in their own provider, they second-guess themselves: Am I really observing what is going on accurately? Did those other parents make a mistake? What's the reality here? This is an anxiety in addition to the cost and availability that I believe we are called on, as a government—as a Legislature, more to the point—to address.

In my own riding of Toronto–Danforth, we have nearly 10,000 families with 15,000 children. That includes 7,000 kids ages zero to five, and over 4,000 kids under age 14 live below the low-income cut-off. That's approximately 28% of the children who live in my riding. That's a lot of children in poverty, in need, and whose families face multiple stressors, child care—or lack of it, more to the point—being one of them.

Approximately 2,500 single-parent families are in my riding, with median incomes of less than \$30,000 per year. Large numbers of people are facing very difficult circumstances.

0940

In the minister's opening remarks at second reading, she said, "Ontario's children and families cannot wait any longer.... They cannot wait for us to strengthen oversight in the child care sector. They cannot wait for access to safe, modern care that gives children what they need most."

In this, I agree with the minister: Families—parents and children—cannot wait. But I am not sure, and my colleagues are not sure, that the bill, as it's currently written, actually addresses the problems that we see in the child care sector.

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care issued a statement on February 28, 2014: "Ontario needs a stronger system of public and not-for-profit child care: Let's do it right!"

They talk about the proposed amendments to regulation 262. I have to say, Speaker, for those who are watching this debate, that what we have before the Legislature is a bill, but what is being considered as well by the min-

ister and the Ministry of Education are regulations that would have substantive and far-reaching impact on the quality of care in this province that are not here for debate but will affect this bill in its deployment and will be of great consequence to children, child care providers and parents across this province.

So I want to quote from the Ontario coalition's statement. They recommend that the "following actions be taken prior to implementing any regulatory changes:

"(1) A full review of the issues facing early learning and child care programs, with an opportunity for information-sharing and consultation with academics, sector leaders and families." I think they're quite correct in saying that there needs to have been a broader range of discussion on these changes to the regulation.

"(2) A full review of the infrastructure of the early years sector and the required supports to build capacity and quality in order to implement change in a consistent, thoughtful manner."

Speaker, when we pass bills in this chamber, we give a government a set of guidelines, a framework within which they can operate. But frankly, any given bill is not enough to make the change that is needed in broader society. It's a question of the policies that come with that bill, a question of the budgets that come with that bill, and a question of planning, strategies and implementation to make a change from one system to another. Having gone through some of the chaos around what I felt was poor implementation of full-day kindergarten, my hope is that there will be some clearer, thought-out strategy in taking another step forward in dealing with the child care system.

The Ontario coalition goes on to say:

"(3) Acknowledgement of the current underfunding that exists within our sector with announcements of further funding to address this shortfall."

It's interesting for me, as the energy critic and as the education critic, to deal with our huge system of electricity supply and to deal with our primary and secondary schools. I see stresses and strains in both those areas, but it's when I come to the child care sector where I see a whole system held together with paper clips and rubber bands. It is a deeply under-resourced sector and one that has extraordinary thinness on the ground: If you take out one part, there's no extra part to fill in. This is a sector that is constantly under strain. I've heard it from parents and I see it when I go to child care centres to talk to the people on the non-profit boards and their staff who are trying to figure out how to make next year's budget work. They do extraordinary things with very limited resources. But in the end, to deliver a system as broadly as it needs to be delivered with the quality that our children need and deserve, there's going to have to be more investment in that system.

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care goes on to say:

"(4) Further, we believe that legislative and regulatory changes should not be implemented to save money but based on the articulated principles outlined in the early

years policy framework. Building an early learning and child care system on these principles will make positive change for the children and families of Ontario. It will also respect the important work of our registered early childhood educators."

I think, frankly, Speaker, it's incumbent on all of us here to take in the recommendations of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and to have them shape our approach to this bill, to the regulation that is being considered in other forums, and to keep it in mind when we go to clause-by-clause debate on this bill.

The lack of affordable, accessible and safe child care spaces can be expressed in a variety of ways, and I just want to go through some numbers. As of 2012, Ontario's median monthly child care fees were \$1,152 per month for an infant, \$925 per month for a toddler and \$835 for a preschooler. But note, infant care fees can be as high as \$2,000 per month. Child care can easily cost parents \$60 a day, over \$10,000 a year.

In Ontario right now, there's a regulated full- or part-time centre-based space for about 20% of children under age five. Only 14% of children under age 13 have access to licensed child care options, according to Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care; 25% of child care is owned by private for-profit organizations. There are approximately 10,000 licensed spaces for infants under 18 months, but according to the ministry's own figures, approximately 43,000 children under the age of 12 months enter child care each year and another 55,000 enter child care after 12 months of age. This means that at least 98,000 infants are competing for just 10,000 licensed spaces each year: one space for every 10 infants.

Last summer, there was a meeting in my riding of the parents of Children's Circle child care. Children's Circle has been in operation for decades. It provides child care for toddlers. It provides child care for school-age children. It supports Jackman and Withrow schools in my riding. It's generally recognized as one of the highest-quality child care centres in Toronto.

That child care centre is dealing with the implications of full-day kindergarten. I want to be very clear here: We like the initiative for full-day kindergarten. We think it is a useful addition to child care options in this province. Nonetheless, Children's Circle was dealing with this issue, and part of the way that they were going to deal with balancing their books was expanding into infant care. There was some dispute with the city over the funding of that infant care, ultimately resolved to everyone's satisfaction. But I have to tell you, the parents in that room who were there at the prospect of infant care, not even a full commitment yet—it was extraordinary. They were desperate. They knew that they had to have care. They had been looking everywhere, and so any glimmer of hope that there could be good-quality infant care available to them was something that they chased with all the strength they had. The suggestion at some point in the meeting that the infant care might not go forward had a huge emotional impact.

We are addressing an issue where people have very high stakes before them in their lives: the ability for

people to continue to pay their mortgages and rents, the ability for people after maternity or paternity leave to go back to work. We need to be able to address this question of available, high-quality child care, affordable child care for parents of infants.

I have to say, Speaker, as my colleague from Davenport was saying, I see a large demographic shift in my riding. Every year I go door to door. It takes me about two years to go through my whole riding. A few years ago, I came across a section of my riding that I christened the baby belt because it was a long series of streets between Sammon and Mortimer where I was hitting baby buggies on every second or third porch and new parents throughout. I was pretty impressed. I thought this was amazing. We've had a big demographic shift. Older families have moved on, and we've got all these new parents coming in. In the last month and a half, as I've gone door to door in my riding, outside the baby belt, I've found an incredible number of newborns at the door. And I want to say to those in the child care sector that if my riding is in any way representative of what's going on in Toronto or Ontario, we've got another wave of kids coming forward. It is baby time.

0950

There are 33,000 licensed spaces for toddlers, ages 18 to 30 months, in Ontario. There are 103,000 licensed spaces for preschoolers. So we have a huge, informal, unlicensed sector. Currently, it is the bulk of child care in this province. It's an important source of income for those who provide that child care. My hope is that we will be able to license almost all of these providers so that we can avoid the kinds of problems that we've seen in this province and the problems that I'll be describing as I go through my speech.

But we are going to need a strategy to get from here to there that is much less disruptive than the process we went through in the implementation of full-day kindergarten, where operators and principals didn't know what was going to happen next. There was not an adequate process of consultation and an adequate process of communication. All of us want supervised child care. We want safety for our children and assurance for our parents. If we're going to get there without having everyone pull their hair out, we have to have a strategy for making that transition.

Intersection: Smooth transition.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Smooth transition. Thank you.

There is a daycare subsidy waiting list in this province that is too long. Parents in many parts of this province, including Toronto and Ottawa, need to put their names on the subsidy waiting list as soon as they learn they are pregnant if they want to have any hope of getting a subsidy by the time they return to work, and even then.

In Toronto, as of November 2013, there were only 3,600 vacant licensed spaces, but over 17,800 names on the waiting list for a child care fee subsidy. In Hamilton, as of last month, there were 1,028 kids on the subsidy wait-list. Speaker, my guess is if you went to any other urban centre—Niagara Falls, for instance, or Kitchener—

Waterloo, London—you would find similar wait-lists and people in similar difficult situations. Those people who need those subsidies are in great difficulty. Those who are making more money, with difficulty, can pay the \$1,000 a month. Those who are working at precarious work or otherwise low-paid work are facing huge difficulties if they want to ensure their children are properly looked after.

Another issue that needs to be addressed in this sector is low wages for staff. Low wages and not enough opportunity for advancement are serious problems affecting the child care sector. According to the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, the average wage of a child care worker is just \$16 per hour. In the words of the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario and the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, "The child care workforce, earning low wages and benefits, is already struggling in an environment offering little support." This poses significant challenges for recruitment and retention of qualified, educated and experienced staff. Frankly, Speaker, I hear that when I talk to people who run non-profit child care: that they have people who are capable but always on the lookout for better work because they find it very difficult to live on the wages that they are being paid. This is an issue that we're going to have to address. We're talking about the people who have charge of our children, who have responsibility for helping those children develop, learn and grow their ability, socially and intellectually, and get paid at wages that are very difficult for them to hold together home and family.

Part of what has sparked this situation, part of what has sparked this bill and debate on this bill, is the reality of child deaths in child care centres in unlicensed care.

On July 28, 2010, two-year-old Jérémié Audette drowned at an unlicensed daycare in Ottawa. Jérémié was brought by his private home daycare provider to a group outing at another home care provider's backyard. The inquest heard there were about 30 children and four to six adults at home. Jérémié's death was ruled accidental, but the 2012 inquest made a number of recommendations about how to make unlicensed child care more safe for children.

The inquest jury made 16 recommendations, including the following—and I believe, Speaker, that we should keep these in mind as we go back to review this bill and consider it on a clause-by-clause basis:

(1) The ratios of adults to children should be the same at unlicensed home child care providers as at licensed providers.

(2) All unlicensed private home daycares, regardless of licensing, should be registered with the ministry. The registry would enable all child care providers to be informed of any changes in the Day Nurseries Act, safety notices or training.

(3) All registered daycares, including unlicensed private home daycare facilities, should be subject to unannounced safety inspections.

(4) That, as part of registration, private home care operators must demonstrate that they possess current, ap-

propriate first aid and CPR training to respond to potential emergency situations.

(5) For special outings, private home daycare operators must obtain written permission from the parent at least one day in advance.

(6) That the ministry shall establish additional criteria for staff-child ratios for off-site excursions to ensure that all children are properly supervised “in an environment of increased risk.”

(7) That the Ministry of Education publish information regarding the differences between licensed and unlicensed private home daycares—and make it available at libraries and medical facilities.

(8) Unlicensed home daycares should be forbidden from having pools.

Those recommendations should be on our minds as we go through and reshape this bill in committee.

In January 2011, 14-month-old Duy-An Nguyen died in an unlicensed Mississauga daycare. The provider was charged with murder.

On July 4, 2013, Allison Tucker, aged 2, was found dead in an unlicensed child care in North York. Her provider is now charged with manslaughter, and the case is before the courts.

Two-year-old Eva Ravikovich died in July 2013 at an unlicensed home daycare in Vaughan. The daycare was illegally overcrowded. There were at least 35 children registered at the Vaughan daycare, and when police arrived, they reportedly found 27 children. The ministry had failed to investigate four complaints. Eva's parents are now suing the Ministry of Education, alleging government negligence was a factor in Eva's death.

In January 2014, the ministry asked that the lawsuit be dismissed. In the notice of motion filed with the court, the ministry says it “does not owe the plaintiff a duty of care” because that facility was unlicensed and unregulated.

In November 2013, a nine-month-old baby, Aspen Juliet Moore, died at an unlicensed child care facility—the third death in unlicensed child care within the past year.

The minister should seriously be considering establishing a registry so that we have a central repository for tracking these deaths. To my knowledge, that sort of tracking does not happen now. But beyond that, we need to be taking the action necessary to make such a registry something that is very rarely used, something that doesn't have to be used regularly because those deaths are avoided.

The ministry does not appear to have the resources necessary to respond to complaints and make investigations. In August 2013, Minister Sandals admitted “that the ministry did not respond to all previous complaints made against this unlicensed provider”—the one I've just referred to—“as is the normal policy of the ministry.” Two ministry officials were suspended. In fact, the ministry failed to respond to 25 out of 448 complaints about overcrowded, unlicensed daycares over the 18-month period prior to Eva's death.

1000

In October 2013, Halton regional health officials said they still don't know if the Ministry of Health takes any action when they forward complaints about child care facilities. Do they pass those on to the Ministry of Education?

I have to say that if we can't even investigate the complaints that have been made, what does that say about the ability to go beyond complaints that are made and keep track of what is going on in the sector as a whole? It says to me that the resources aren't there and that it poses a situation of risk for the children and families of this province.

On July 12, 2013, the member for Hamilton Mountain wrote to the Ombudsman to “request ... an investigation into the adequacy of the government of Ontario's protection of children in unlicensed child care operations.” Ombudsman Marin is currently probing the ministry's handling of child care complaints. His review is expected to be completed soon, and we look forward to examining the results of his investigation.

I want to thank Monique Taylor, the member for Hamilton Mountain. She has been a loud, strong voice for children and parents and for daycare providers in this House, and I think all of them appreciate the fact that she did make this request to the Ombudsman, and we are very pleased that the Ombudsman is taking action.

On inspections—a bit further: Licensed centres are monitored by provincial personnel on an annual basis, but inadequate oversight of unlicensed child care is a major problem. The ministry doesn't track unlicensed daycares and is only supposed to visit them if someone formally complains.

In 40% of cases of complaints about unlicensed home daycares, inspectors found that the providers were in violation of the Day Nurseries Act because they had too many children in their home, that is, more than five under the age of 10.

Lack of inspectors is one of the main problems. There were only 54 child care inspectors as of the end of 2013. Ministry documents show some investigations were carried out over the phone. Somehow, I find it hard to believe that an investigation carried out over the phone would be adequate for the problems before us and the risks before us. The ministry investigated 289 complaints in the year prior to the death of Eva Ravikovich but levied only one fine, for a total of \$1,500.

Speaker, the lack of inspection capacity shows not just with unlicensed child care but also with licensed child care, and I just want to bring the attention of members of this House to an article that was published on September 3, 2011, in the *Toronto Star*. I'll just quote Laurie Monsebraaten:

“An award-winning daycare in Markham has had its licence suspended after three toddlers walked out of the playground undetected, crossed a busy parking lot and entered a neighbouring drugstore.

“A subsequent investigation by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services found that the children were

being underfunded and that the centre's supervisor was not qualified.

"Three staff were supervising 11 children on the morning of August 16 when the incident occurred.

"After the toddlers—ranging in age from 18 to 24 months and still in diapers—wandered out of sight, five other children also escaped from the playground through an open gate. But the five were rounded up before they got very far"—

Interjection: It was a jail break.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It was a jail break.

Local business owners responded very responsibly. They rounded up the kids, they called the police and they made sure a report was written by the police before they turned the children back over to the child care centre.

The ministry told the owner to hire a new supervisor. There was, in that time, in 2011, a notice posted on the door. The children were gone for about 12 minutes before staff were sent out to retrieve them. Now notably, the daycare opened on June 10, 2009, and won the Markham Economist and Sun's reader choice award for the best child care two years running. I think, Speaker, this illustrates the fact that parents can't always tell with certainty what is going on in a centre. There's a reason that we need capable inspectors who know what to look for, because a friendly person with good presentation in many cases can give a sense to a parent that things are all right, when in fact there are substantial problems. Note that the ministry inspected that same daycare in June and gave failing grades on 12 points.

The inspections were done. It's not clear to me that the parents were made aware that the centre was falling below the standard that has been set in Ontario law. Frankly, if I can go to a restaurant and see whether it's got a pass/fail from a health inspector, I think parents should be able to know, when they go to a child care centre or a home care centre, this operation has been inspected and it is acceptable and in compliance with the law.

One of the biggest issues that's coming up around the regulation that's coming forward at the same time in this bill has to do with increasing group sizes. The bill increases the maximum number of children in licensed home care from five to six, and as many as 12 children under the age of two can receive care from two providers working together. The concurrent proposed regulation changes will increase the size of groups for younger children. Children as young as 13 months will be able to be in groups of five kids to one staff member, which is an increase in group size of 66%. This is very concerning to parents and the child care advocacy community. This bill debate is really our only chance to talk to this regulation, which is of great consequence.

I want to take a few statements from briefing notes that have been put out by the Child Care Resource and Research Unit. People will be familiar with the name Martha Friendly, who has been an advocate for child care for decades and, frankly, widely respected and someone who, when she speaks, everyone involved in the sector

should be sitting up and listening to. She writes: "Why is child care quality important? Child development research makes it clear that the importance of quality of early childhood programs cannot be overstated. If children are to benefit from them, early childhood education and child care programs must be high quality; poor quality early childhood education may be negative for children."

She goes on to say, "While no one structural feature alone can predict quality, the research shows that staff-child ratios (adults to children) are one of the most important elements of quality, especially for younger children. Overall, the research finds that fewer children per adult ... are associated with higher global quality scores; more interaction between staff and children; more responsive caregiving; better academic, cognitive and social outcomes."

And ratios have a direct impact on the staff themselves—on working conditions, on the morale, on the ability of people to be recruited and retained.

"The research also shows that it is particularly important for younger age groups—infants and toddlers—to be cared for in child care settings with better ratios and group sizes."

The child care research unit goes on to look at the proposed ratio-to-group-size changes and what it means for young children. Currently, "An infant between one and one and a half years may not be walking or eating independently and is likely to be in diapers. She is currently in an infant room with nine other babies and three adults, at least one with ECE training." What's proposed: "Under the new ratio/group sizes: She could be in a room with 14 other babies, between one and two years, with three staff, at least one with the ECE training."

I've been in rooms with large numbers of 12-month-olds.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's chaos.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes, chaos is a correct description.

When people who work in this field, who do the academic research, who are in touch with child care centres, warn loudly that these ratios are highly problematic, we need to pay attention to that. The minister needs to pay attention to that.

Another example: Currently, "A toddler between two and two and a half years is in diapers or toilet training, walking but not yet cautious about danger and not yet comfortable with always 'using words' to settle a dispute about a toy. He is now in a toddler room with 14 others between one and a half and two and a half years with three staff, (at least) one with ECE training."

"Proposed: Under the new ratios/group sizes, he could be in a room with 23 other toddlers and preschoolers between two and four years with three staff, two of whom are ECEs, or in a room with 15 others with two staff, (at least) one with ECE training."

Speaker, those are very substantial changes in ratio.

It's been interesting to me to not only have people like Martha Friendly express concern about these ratios, but frankly having unlicensed providers who have had a long history in my riding providing care in their homes come

in and say, "I don't work in those centres, but that ratio doesn't look like it works. I deal with a lot of infants; I deal with a lot of toddlers. That would be very, very difficult for anyone to manage and I can't see it working for those children." So it's not only those who have a long history of fighting for child care and understand the ramifications of change in ratios from an academic and a day-care management perspective, but also those who, on a day-to-day basis, are working with children and have a sense of what 15 one-year-olds in a room means.

With all the challenges facing parents in this province, we have a duty to ensure the bill addresses these problems and increases access to affordable, safe child care for Ontario families. New Democrats will ask: How does this bill protect kids in unlicensed child care operations? How does this bill provide assurance to parents that their kids will be safe for six, eight or 10 hours every day? How does this bill ensure that every complaint received is acted upon? How does this bill ensure that the ministry never acts negligently towards children in care again? How do we ensure that no more children will die in licensed or unlicensed child care facilities in this province? Those are the questions that we're going to have to answer. If there aren't good answers in this bill, then we have a duty to amend it when it gets to committee stage, to ensure that we can keep children safe.

Speaker, you look like you want to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Well, I just thought that perhaps this was a natural conclusion.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a privilege to introduce my lovely wife, Joanne, sitting in the gallery today. She's here to watch our daughter Abbey, who is page captain today.

Hon. Michael Chan: I would like to welcome members of the Organization of Book Publishers of Ontario to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: As I looked in the gallery this morning, I was very pleased to see a constituent of mine who is with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture: Louis Roesch from Roesch Meats and More—great sausages.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A commercial during an introduction; that's pretty good.

The member from Haldimand—Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, perhaps before you do, I wish to introduce—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, go ahead. Step on my constituent; go ahead.

Mr. Toby Barrett: —a former constituent of mine, Larry Davis, Brant federation.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to welcome the members of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture here with us today. Thank you very much for being here.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce a constituent of mine, Brent Royce, who is here with the OFA.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to welcome some guests who are here visiting Queen's Park from the Canadian Federation of Students: Corey Grist, Nipissing University; Kayla Fitzsimmons, Nipissing University; Chris Burke, Nipissing University; Rajean Hoilett, Ryerson University; Chris Hynes, Ottawa university; Kevin Godbout, Western University; Gayle McFadden, York University; Ben Perry, Trent University; Kaitlyn Teller, Algoma University; Asad Jamal, University of Toronto, St. George campus; and Anastacia Jiang, University of Toronto, Scarborough campus. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's great to introduce to the House some of my favourite and youngest constituents. They're the grade 5 students from Rose Avenue public school up in the gallery, the new face of Canada. They're here with their teachers Catherine Englis and Kathleen Quan—lots of future MPPs in that group.

M^{me} France Gélinas: They have not arrived yet but they are on their way: Wendy Preskow, who is the founder of NIED, which is the National Institute for Eating Disorders; and Dr. Gail McVey, who will be here today watching the proceedings. Welcome.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to welcome Dr. Mhairi McFarlane, who is a conservation biologist with the Nature Conservancy of Canada; James Duncan, who is the regional VP of the Nature Conservancy of Canada; Heather Hoare, who is the director of development at the Nature Conservancy of Canada; and Everett de Jong from Pelee Island Winery. They're here today to share information on restoring and protecting the monarch butterfly here in Ontario. Their reception is in room 230 after question period. I want to welcome them here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? On behalf of the member from St. Paul's, the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, to see page Thomas Clifford are father, Jonathan Clifford, and brother Andrew Clifford. They are here in the public gallery today to visit the page. Thank you for joining us.

On behalf of the member from Beaches—East York and page Anne Lafaury: the father, Philippe Lafaury, and grandmother, Genevieve Lafaury. Welcome to Queen's Park and thank you for visiting.

Also, the member from Haldimand—Norfolk used to have this member as his constituent, who is now my constituent as the member from Brant: a representative of the OFA, Mr. Larry Davis. Welcome and thank you for being with us today.

Anyone else want to introduce him? That's fine by me.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, our point of view on this side of the House is that

the focus of government should be creating an environment for more jobs with better take-home pay. You seem to have—based on your legislative agenda, like regulating menus in the province—other priorities.

Soaring electricity costs have taken Ontario from a competitive advantage in energy to now among the highest cost of energy in North America. That's costing us jobs. It means investment goes to other provinces. The leading driver and the greatest pressure for increased costs are your unaffordable subsidies for wind and solar projects.

Premier, given the damage your government has already caused through the Green Energy Act, isn't it time to call an end to this madness and end those subsidies that we simply can't afford?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that the Leader of the Opposition should talk to the people who are in those 31,000 jobs that have been created because of the Green Energy Act. The fact is that there are—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want those people who are speaking while I'm trying to get their attention to be warned. I am not going to allow the shouting down of anyone today.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are 255 contracts in place which the Leader of the Opposition says that they would cancel. Well, he says they would cancel, then an official in their office says they wouldn't cancel them, so it's actually unclear. But were he to move ahead with what he's saying he would do—cancel those contracts—that would expose the province to a risk of up to \$20 billion in costs. That is not responsible. That is what the Tory plan would do, and we are certainly not going to buy into that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, look: The only party that has cancelled contracts in this province is the Liberal Party under Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne.

Interjection: A billion-dollar scandal.

Mr. Tim Hudak: That cost us over \$1 billion. Yesterday, Premier, you couldn't even, meeting face to face with Madi Vanstone, promise that this girl could have access to pharmaceutical treatment in our province because you'd rather spend \$1 billion cancelling gas plant contracts in the province of Ontario. That's the consequence of your decision. My point of view is: Turn off the tap and stop doing the damage.

The Premier says that she has seen 31,000 jobs created building wind turbines and solar panels. I invite the Premier, then, to table exactly where those jobs are because, quite frankly, I don't believe you. But the Auditor General himself said that for every short-term job you create building turbines, you lose four in the broader economy. So help me with the math: Why are you preferring 31,000 jobs to the 124,000 jobs you lost as a result of higher hydro costs?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're not helping. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, all of the parties in the Legislature agreed and campaigned on cancelling the gas plants. It's only the Conservatives who are continuing to suggest that cancelling contracts that could expose the province to costs of up to \$20 billion—they're saying that that would be a responsible way forward.

1040

But I think what is most disturbing about what the Leader of the Opposition is doing this morning is, he's not being clear. He's saying on the one hand that he would cancel contracts that would cost up to \$20 billion, and then he's saying, no, he wouldn't cancel the contracts. I think it's only fair to ask: What exactly would he do and what would be the costs that he would expose the province to?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: What I'd do is stop wasting money and only sign power contracts that are affordable and where we need it. In fact, Premier, we laid that plan out over two years ago. It has reliable and affordable energy. I've shared that with you. I only wish that you had taken at least some aspects of that plan instead of doubling down on Dalton McGuinty's approach. I know that it's a new voice and a new name on the Premier's office, but you're basically a clone of Dalton McGuinty when it comes to his harmful policies.

In my point of view, this has been a reckless and expensive policy. The auditor says we lose four jobs for every short-term job we create in the province of Ontario. If the biggest issue is jobs, if we're losing jobs every day to Michigan or Chicago, where their energy prices are half our costs, why are you digging the hole deeper?

Stop this madness now. End the unfair subsidies. We can't afford it. Let's focus on job creation here in the province of Ontario—not in New York, not in Michigan; right here in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I want to use a couple of examples to respond to the Leader of the Opposition.

Let's talk about Canadian Solar, which is a manufacturing facility in Guelph. I believe they have somewhere around 300 jobs there—very significant for that community. They are a world leader in terms of their technology, and they are exporting their product.

Let's talk about Celestica, which is a solar company that manufactures right here in Toronto. They've got 200 or 300 employees in their facility. They are exporting product, and they're cutting-edge in this particular area.

Let's talk about Siemens in southwest Ontario, where they are continuing to add jobs. I had lunch with senior

executives about three weeks ago. In addition to the jobs that had been announced with that project, they are creating another 150 jobs in administration and in their product.

Mr. Speaker, we have been creating jobs in the Green Energy Act. We're going to continue to do so, and they have no—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier, if I could: I'd love to spend the time reciting all of the 300,000 job losses in our province. The fact of the matter is, to put it in perspective, Premier, we could have everybody who lost the 300,000 manufacturing jobs as a result of higher energy costs—they could actually fill the gallery, like the students here today, every day, seven days a week, for eight straight years. That's the impact of your damaging and reckless policies to our province.

Here's the other thing: Now you've lost a World Trade Organization ruling. Japan and the European Union sued us because of the made-in-Ontario provisions in your Green Energy Act. So that is now being removed. This basically means that your old premise was that we would lose four jobs in manufacturing to create one job in solar and wind in Ontario. Now we're going to lose four jobs in Ontario for every job we're going to create in Europe or China or Japan. That math doesn't make sense. It's not in the interest of Ontarians.

I'll ask you again, Premier: Just stop this madness and repeal the policy. Let's focus on jobs in Ontario.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Leader of the Opposition knows that we're taking the necessary steps to comply with the World Trade Organization ruling.

He also knows that this will mean a reduction in the cost to Ontarians of electricity of \$1.9 billion over the next four years. That's actually one of the ways that costs are being taken out of the system.

The non-plan that the leader is putting forward would cost the province jobs. He would cancel contracts that could expose the province to costs of up to \$20 billion. He would not comply, apparently, with the World Trade Organization ruling, which is taking \$1.9 billion out of the system. So it's very, very reasonable to ask: Exactly what would he do to have a reliable energy source going forward—clean renewables and a stable electricity system?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: What would I do? I'd end the unaffordable subsidies of wind and solar. I thought I'd been clear on this, Speaker.

Look, to be very serious about this: You've lost the World Trade Organization ruling. I know you've been briefed on that. It's very serious. The problem is, you lost that almost a year ago, and because of your incompetence or bungling—I'm not sure what happened on that side of the House—we're not going to be compliant, in all likeli-

hood, by March 24, which leaves us open to trade repercussions and a trade war.

But it seems to me also, when you look at the premise of your argument, that we're going to lose jobs in manufacturing to create jobs in wind and solar. If you eliminate the made-in-Ontario provisions, you're going to lose jobs in Ontario to create jobs in China and Japan. I mean, how is that in the interest of Ontarians? It seems to me, instead of going down that path of a pro-China jobs policy, bringing a pro-Ontario jobs policy might be—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton, come to order, and the member from Dufferin—Caledon, come to order.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Leader of the Opposition is in so far over his head, it's embarrassing. Every single renewable contract that we have issued—those which have been completed, and 255 which are still in production—gets the benefit of domestic content. We have created a viable, best-class—manufacturing facilities in the world, Mr. Speaker, in the ones that I mentioned earlier, Canadian Solar and Celestica.

But what is important is they have an unnamed spokesperson saying, "If the minister decided that we didn't need the power, if the local municipality wasn't welcoming of the project, and it didn't make sense on a cost-benefit analysis, then we would exercise the termination clauses that already exist."

Mr. Speaker, we have the legal opinion which says that FIT contracts allow for termination only in cases where—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're only stealing your leader's time.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'd like to talk, Premier, about the human costs of the 300,000 lost manufacturing jobs as a result of your reckless energy policies.

Then there's Shellie Correia. Shellie lives in West Lincoln. She leads the organization Mothers Against Wind Turbines in the province. In fact, our member for Huron—Bruce, Lisa Thompson, organized a rally here on behalf of Mothers Against Wind Turbines.

As you know, I think, Ms. Correia has a son who has been diagnosed with sensory processing issues. He has ADHD; he's very sensitive to noise. That's why she has risen to be an advocate, a leading advocate, for mothers on behalf of their kids. She lives near potential turbines. She, like other mothers, is fighting for her children's well-being.

Big corporations with connections to the Liberal Party are quashing the little guy when it comes to this policy as well. When you launched your leadership, you talked about creating a more fair and just society. What is fair about well-connected companies quashing the rights of Ms. Correia, her son and other hard-working families across the province—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make two points. Number one, we have the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health, who has indicated that this is an appropriate and healthy industrial infrastructure. But most importantly, renewable energy has, in a significant way, been replacing dirty coal. That's the largest climate-change—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the health impacts of getting out of dirty coal: \$4.4 billion in avoided health care and environmental costs; 668 fewer premature deaths per year; 928 fewer hospital admissions per year; 1,100 fewer emergency room visits per year; and 333,000 fewer minor illnesses, such as headaches. It is one of the best health initiatives we've taken in this province in our history, to get rid of dirty coal, which they expanded—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I remind the Minister of Energy: When I stand, you sit. When I stand, everyone sits. When I stand, everyone is quiet.

I will take this time to remind you that my patience is very thin with members calling each other by names, and I'm going to deal with it. It does not elevate the debate; it lowers it. Stop.

New question.

1050

HYDRO CHARGES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is for the Premier: Why are families and business still getting overcharged by Hydro One on their bills?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Hydro One has 1.3 million customers, and a number of them—a small number of them—have had billing errors. I want to be very clear: The CEO of Hydro One has apologized, and I've indicated in this House that we share in the apology for the inconvenience that has been caused to people who have received these improper billings.

The CEO has made it very, very clear that no one will have to pay anything extra, that if there are late charges or interest charges or they need time to pay, they will be

given that time. We have a high-tech system. There were four stages to it. Three stages went off very, very well. The CEO has taken on additional staff, and he is assuring everybody that they will not have anything extra to pay.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Why are overbilled Hydro One customers not getting the refunds that they were promised?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Hydro One operations have taken on additional staff. They are calling and dealing with individual customers one by one to meet that particular challenge and to deal with the issues around improper bills.

As I've said, nobody is paying extra. Nobody is paying interest. Nobody is paying late charges. Nobody is getting cut off. They have 1.3 million customers. The overwhelming majority of them are being properly served. These errors are being rectified, and I would ask the member, if she has anybody who's got a complaint with respect to the billing, to please bring it to our attention.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families are having a hard enough time paying their actual hydro bills without getting dinged for hundreds and sometimes thousands of extra dollars. Hydro One promised to fix the errors, but people are still being overbilled. Hydro One promised refunds, but people haven't seen them.

Hydro One only has one shareholder, Speaker: It's the province. What is the government doing on behalf of the people they represent to fix these problems?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Nobody is paying extra as a result of the billing errors. The CEO has made it very, very clear that nobody will be liable for any of those payments. There will be no interest charges. There will be no disconnections. They have a huge team now in Hydro One that is dealing with those people who have been affected. The CEO and the team are working personally with the people who have been involved.

They have acted professionally, and we're extremely proud of the fact that Hydro One has been rated as one of the best utilities in North America, in the top five.

HYDRO CHARGES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier, and I would prefer an actual answer instead of boosterism on Hydro One. Simone Laffierre is a resident of Timmins. Her normal hydro bill is about \$350 a month. This January, she received a bill that was three times that amount. She complained to Hydro One, and this month her bill was nearly three times the normal amount—again.

Does the Premier think that this is acceptable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We understand that there has been significant inconvenience, and we and Hydro One apologize. We apologize for that. The fact is that the Minister of Energy has outlined the initiatives that Hydro One is taking to correct the issue. If the leader of the third

party is aware of people for whom this has still not been the case, where the correction has not happened, then we need to know that, we need to have that information, and these situations will be corrected.

Hydro One is taking action, and no one will have to pay extra because of the errors that were made administratively. Those errors are being corrected.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I beg to differ. Ina Lamoureux lives in Englehart. On January 20, she was hit with not one, not two, but six bills, all on the same day. Hydro One had already tried to clear out her bank account last summer with a \$1,500 bill that they admit was an error. However, they still will not give Ina her money back. Why is the Premier ignoring the plight of Ina and thousands like her?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're not, in fact. When the Ombudsman came to me and we had a conversation about his concern about Hydro One, I was able to say that we were already concerned about it. I'm glad that the Ombudsman is looking at the situation, but the fact is that Hydro One has already taken action. If there are individuals—and I don't know whether the leader of the third party is going to have other names. If there are names of people who are still in a situation where they have not had the refund or they're still concerned about the bill, then Hydro One would like to know that and the Minister of Energy would like to have those names. It was a mistake. It shouldn't have happened. It's being corrected, and if the leader of the third party has names, we'd like to have that information.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's heartening that the Premier is concerned already, since I first sent a letter about this issue back in 2010 to their Minister of Energy. For families and businesses paying the highest hydro bills in Canada, this is yet another example of an electricity system that simply is not working for them.

People who are already paying the price for cancelled gas plants, failed private power schemes and subsidized power exports have a simple question for this Premier: When will the government stop overcharging on their hydro bills and give them back the money that they are owed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not sure how much clearer we can be. There were mistakes made. Those mistakes are being corrected. If there are still people who have a problem, who have been overcharged, that needs to be corrected, and Hydro One is in the process of doing that. Individual customers are being phoned. There are extra staff that are doing that work. If there are individuals who have not yet had that respite, then we need to have that information, and we look forward to the leader of the third party giving it to us if she chooses.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question, as well, is to the Premier. Good morning, Premier. The Ontario Progress-

sive Conservative Party has had a long-standing opposition to the Green Energy Act. We know that for every job it creates, we lose four more. Those are the auditor's numbers, not just ours.

We know, for example, that municipalities across Ontario are opposed to this because they've had their locally based decision-making stripped. We know, for example, that no health and scientific studies were done prior to the Green Energy Act being in place, and now Health Canada has to come in and clean up the mess of this Liberal government. Finally, we know, from travelling across the province, that the Green Energy Act is the single biggest driver of increasing hydro costs in this province.

If those facts weren't enough for this government, they would surely know that when they broke the World Trade Organization's laws, enough was enough, and that was the final nail in the coffin. Will they scrap the Green Energy Act so that we can finally get prices under control?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The Attorney General will come to order. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I, too, am energized this morning, especially with my special Sault Ste. Marie tie, compliments of the member over there. But I will say that the party across there thinks they know what renewable energy is all about, so what they do is introduce a Million Jobs Act. In the Million Jobs Act, they say that they are going to cancel the 255 existing renewable contracts with wind developers. That's \$20 billion of power supply.

The Leader of the Opposition is smiling. He should be embarrassed by the act that he introduced here.

There will be a cost associated with the cancellations. That is a legal opinion that we have.

They believe that, at the end of the process when the developer has complied with all provisions, their Minister of Energy, if they ever get to form government, will be able to cancel the contract—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Time is up. Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That was bizarre. I'm just going to say this: If anybody should be embarrassed, it's for the last decade of decline by this Liberal government as they drove hydro rates through the roof, as they broke international law, as they ignored the fact that we need health and scientific studies on the GEA. It's a fact that we are losing jobs because of this government. They should be embarrassed.

1100

But Speaker, this is a government that is beyond reproach, and I'll tell you why. They're not only happy with having an OPP investigation launched into them on the gas plants, they're not only happy having the OPP investigate them on Ornge; they also are international lawbreakers. My leader has stated that Bill 153, which is supposed to bring Canada into compliance at the WTO,

will not pass by the deadline. We know that this is going to embarrass the federal government. It could put our province into an international trade war.

Will they do the right thing? Will they stand with us? Will they eliminate the Green Energy Act to make sure Canada is no longer embarrassed—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West is not doing himself any favours.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, if that party ever got to be in power—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Chatham—Kent—Essex, come to order—second time.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—they would spend \$20 billion on new nuclear that we don't need. They would send prices skyrocketing—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton will come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: If that party got in power, they would cancel \$20 billion in contracts, legal contracts. They want the right to cancel contracts that developers are 100% in compliance with, Mr. Speaker. That is the type of government they're going to have. Energy rates would soar under that party, the way they soared when they were in government before. They have no credible plan. They don't understand renewable energy. They don't understand health care benefits from renewable energy. I coached a hockey team, Mr. Speaker, where six kids on the bench had asthma—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Stop the clock.

I'm disappointed in some of the comments that some people are making, and I will just jump right to warnings now.

Interjection: Throw somebody out.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Including the person who just gave me some armchair quarterbacking.

New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: In 2010, this government made changes to the Ontario insurance regime that resulted in a slash to benefits for victims and handed the insurance industry approximately \$2 billion in savings. This boosted the industry's profits—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry. Direct the question, please.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: To the Premier; my apologies.

Today the government made another announcement that will make more changes to benefit the insurance companies, to reduce their costs. But the people in On-

tario are wondering, will the minister answer this question: When will the people in Ontario see some speedy action to see their rates go down?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, this morning, the member opposite is referencing the fact that we're going to be introducing legislation this afternoon talking about—we are reducing rates. I'm pleased to say that we've reduced rates; we're on target to reduce rates by 15% over the next two years. That is because of the work that we as government have been doing over the last five years, including attacking fraud, eliminating the issues of disputes, trying to facilitate and accelerate benefits to the victims.

In all, Mr. Speaker, we need to reduce those claim costs in order to establish better premiums. The member opposite knows that full well. He himself agreed with us over two years to reduce it by 15%, and we're on track to do just that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This government has a choice. They can either pass on a portion of the \$2 billion in savings that the industry is enjoying, or they can sit back and continue to allow the insurance companies to slash benefits and pocket the savings.

The government says the rates are coming down, but the reality is, many people in Ontario don't see that. They don't see their rates coming down; in fact, they see their rates climbing. You can spin the numbers, but you can't change the facts.

Drivers need relief in Ontario. Today, the government has made an announcement that they're going to make more changes to bring down the costs for insurance companies, but what guarantee is there that costs will go down for drivers in Ontario? When will the government take some speedy action for drivers, for once, as opposed to the insurance companies?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I find this very passing strange. The member opposite is suggesting that rates are not coming down. In fact, the third party has indicated that rates are coming down, and they've been coming down in the first six months since we introduced it, well ahead of what was anticipated. We'll continue to do that.

That's why we have instituted some of the recommendations by Justice Cunningham around dispute resolution. That's why we're looking at the rate of interest that's held, so that the benefits can be given to the victims more quickly. That's why we're looking at storage and ensuring that victims aren't being abused in the system. That's why we're looking at the agent and adjusters and providing greater enforcement, so that there's more disciplinary action to reduce those causes of fraud, and that is why we're looking at health clinics, knowing full well that in Ontario it's much more expensive to service our needs than it is in other provinces. We need to address that, and we are, all with the intent of reducing premiums. The member opposite knows that full well. We have taken action and rates are coming down.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Education. In my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, there are over 70 elementary and secondary schools. When I speak with my constituents who live in our new subdivisions, they always ask when their schools will be built.

On Friday, the minister did make an important announcement in Cornell, in my riding, which signaled a continued commitment to investing in people. However, in rapidly growing communities such as mine, there is always anxiety about services matching needs. Can the minister please inform us about the record of her ministry's investment in the future of Ontario's students?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd really like to commend the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, who's a fierce advocate for her riding and for the schools in particular in her riding.

Let me tell you something about the elementary and secondary schools in Ontario. In fact, the education real estate portfolio is worth \$52 billion. It's actually the biggest real estate portfolio of any Ontario ministry, and we've actually invested \$12 billion in that portfolio over the last 10 years. What that means is that since 2003, we've invested \$12 billion in Good Places to Learn for Ontario students and \$12 billion for workers in Ontario who work in the construction industry. In Markham, this year, we have just announced a \$50-million construction—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Minister, and I know that my constituents were extremely happy to hear that two new schools will be built in my riding, which has almost doubled in population over the last 10 years. These new schools will ensure that, despite my riding's rapid growth, students will not have to attend overcrowded schools.

It is my understanding that school boards across Ontario submitted some 260 capital project proposals in the past year. I know my community was not the only one to benefit from recent investments in education infrastructure.

Speaker, through you, can the minister please inform the House about the process by which the ministry approves these capital investments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: In fact the member is correct that the ratio of submissions to actual approvals is about 5 to 1, and we actually do this in a very rigorous way. We ask each school board to submit detailed business cases for their top eight priorities. The staff at my ministry go through each of those business cases and score them, and the projects are actually awarded on the strength of the business cases that are submitted to my ministry.

This year, we will be announcing over the next few weeks \$700 million in additional projects, and I was very pleased on Friday that we could announce two projects in Markham. In addition to those projects, we announced three new schools and two additions in Waterloo region,

two new schools and four secondary program upgrades in Guelph and Dufferin county, four new elementary schools in Brampton and a new elementary school in Kleinberg, so significant investments are being made.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, Madi Vanstone is a very courageous girl, but as courageous as she is, she needs your help. She needs your help to get access to a life-saving drug, Kalydeco. Kalydeco allows Madi to feel like a normal 12-year-old girl, free from symptoms of cystic fibrosis.

Yesterday in the House, the Premier said she wants to fund Kalydeco but can't. But, Minister, you know that you and the Premier both have the power to make this happen. Will you stand today and commit to funding Kalydeco for Madi?

Interjections.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I was delighted to meet Madi and her mom yesterday. Madi is a very courageous young woman, a very articulate young woman, who is benefiting tremendously from a drug that she has been on now for seven months.

The member opposite knows that this is a breakthrough drug. This is a drug that, for a small subset of people with cystic fibrosis, improves their quality of life. We are negotiating at a pan-Canadian level. All health ministers across the country have agreed to negotiate with Vertex, the pharmaceutical company based in the United States, to get the best value for money.

If you are suggesting that we just pay whatever price the pharmaceutical company asks us to pay, I disagree. We must negotiate. That allows us to fund more drugs for more people.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Both the minister and the Premier continue to hide behind the Pan-Canadian Pricing Alliance, saying that their hands are tied. But that's an answer that even little Madi Vanstone didn't buy.

The fact of the matter is, you do not need the permission of the alliance to take action. Minister, you have an opportunity to be a leader here. You have the power to fund Kalydeco for Madi, and you don't need to wait for anyone or anything in order to take action. Minister, this child's life may be on the line in a few months if her personal fundraising runs out. Will you commit to funding Kalydeco for Madi?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Health?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I said earlier, this is a pan-Canadian process. All of the Progressive Conservative health ministers, including the minister for Alberta and other provinces with a Progressive Conserva-

tive government, are in the very same position. When we negotiate together, we do get better prices. We've successfully negotiated 28 new drugs for 31 conditions, and we've been able to do that, to work together.

The member opposite is saying to fund one drug for one child. That is not the way we can do this. We cannot do this on a one-off. I believe the system is working. We have to get Vertex, the US-based, publicly traded pharmaceutical company, to actually negotiate with us. Three offers have been put on the table; three offers have been rejected. The responsibility is with that company to negotiate.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety. The original \$113-million security budget for the Pan Am Games has more than doubled, to \$239 million. The minister said that the cost of security is not included in the total cost of the games.

We had the cost of the athletes' village not included in the total games cost and estimates, and now we have this bloated security cost not included in the total cost of the games. We still don't have a contract. What other multi-million-dollar surprises has this government got for us in the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games costs?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you very much to the member for his question. The security of our athletes, coaches and visitors to the Pan Am Games is our utmost responsibility and desire. We have been planning the security, headed by the OPP. It's an integrated security group. As part of this integrated security group, there are nine different police forces around the GTA region.

There was a forecast about the cost of security, and of course, we went further than that. We went to see what happened in Vancouver, what happened in Mexico and what happened in London, and got advice from them on what we should do and what we should move forward with to prevent what happened, let's say, in London. So the cost of the security will—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. I think we were—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Wait till I sit.

Mr. Paul Miller: I think we were talking about costs for the Pan Am village. The minister claims that the day-to-day security costs will be less than the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, but how can that be true when security costs are already more than double the original budget with 16 months to go until the games? This makes it very hard to believe that costs will not continue to escalate.

Speaker, will the minister provide Ontarians with the true current cost of law enforcement and security and a believable—believable—projection of the real cost for these games?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I rely very much on the experts—not on MPPs around the province, but on the experts. We have, heading this group, a very professional

police officer, very experienced in different large events like the Olympics and the Pan Am. So we will continue.

We have now a forecast which is \$239 million. It did increase because we have increased the number of venues; we have increased the number of days. That's why the costs have increased.

But I will not negotiate here the safety of the athletes, the safety of the coaches and the safety of the visitors. I trust the good advice that we got from our professionals in your—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A second time: I'm going to remind people that when I stand, you sit down. New question.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Rural Affairs. Minister, small, rural and northern communities have had chronic challenges, I think it's fair to say, for some time. Unlike challenges that our larger municipalities tend to face, they usually have, or often can have, large geographic land bases and relatively small tax bases to fund their needs. We've responded with a number of programs, I think it's fair to say: the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, the Eastern Ontario Development Fund, and one of the programs I know that you, as the Minister of Rural Affairs, are very proud of, the RED program, the Rural Economic Development Fund. It's a program that I've had success with in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan as well.

Minister, I wonder if you, in your capacity as responsible for rural affairs, can tell this House what that program has been able to do for these kinds of municipalities in our province.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank my good friend the hard-working member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan for that insightful question this morning.

In today's economy, it's essential for municipalities to adapt to changing economic conditions. That's why initiatives like RED are so important. Just to give you a bit of background, Mr. Speaker, since 2003, Ontario has invested \$167 million in 418 RED projects right across this province, generating about \$1.2 billion in local economic activity and creating more than 35,000 jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I'm always reminded of a great quote from one William Grenville Davis when he was Premier of the province of Ontario. Mr. Davis used to always say that Ontario is still a province of small towns with big dreams. So just yesterday, and over the last couple of months, I had the mayor of Port Hope and the mayor of Cobourg come to see me. We provided Port Hope yesterday with \$100,000 for their downtown revitalization program, and \$125,000 to the town of Cobourg for their downtown revitalization program—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Minister, thank you for that answer. One of the programs that we have, a similar program

focused specifically on northern Ontario, of course, is the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, a program we're very proud of in the north, originally started by the Peterson government in the late 1980s. It was funded at \$60 million annually. We've increased that now to \$100 million annually, a huge additional commitment to the people of northern Ontario, and I would say it's doing great work. It's also a program that businesses, I think it's fair to say, represented by NOACC, the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce, have long asked for, because businesses in northern Ontario historically have a challenge accessing capital.

Programs like the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, the eastern fund and, I would say, the new permanent \$100-million infrastructure fund, under the Minister of Transportation, along with the RED program—there's a whole suite of programs that are now available to help our small, rural and northern communities.

Minister, can you tell us again, in terms of the long-term viability for our small, northern and rural municipalities, what that suite of programs can provide?

1120

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for the wonderful supplementary question. He's long been a champion of the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, and when I've been touring northern Ontario, whether it's in the great community of North Bay or Timmins or Thunder Bay or Sudbury, they all are very appreciative of the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund.

Just yesterday, I had the opportunity to chat with some leaders from northern Ontario through live streaming for the first ever Rural Ontario Summit. We heard yesterday from Dr. David Freshwater and Dr. Rob Greenwood, experts at rural development, coming forward with good ideas that they share with everybody through the great Rural Ontario Institute. We brought together local leaders in economic development, business, health care, social services and municipal government—the backbone, as Mr. Davis used to say; small towns with big dreams.

It was a great opportunity to discuss the social and economic infrastructure issues that will shape the great future of rural Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I look forward to keep building on the successes of our local communities as we—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I don't know what's going on, but, quite frankly—you are supposed to be speaking to the Speaker; you should see that the Speaker is standing up. When I stand up, you sit down. I don't understand this.

New question.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. Minister, no matter

how often you say the “on time and on budget” mantra, it won't make it true. Yesterday, you got caught on repeat exactly at the same time as a 15% budget increase was being announced for security. It seems the budget and your credibility are inversely related: as the budget skyrockets, your credibility plummets. This is the most expensive Pan Am Games ever.

Minister, will you step down so that someone who can handle the multi-billion-dollar games can take over and actually protect our tax dollars?

Hon. Michael Chan: This is another new round of random attacks on the Pan and Parapan American Games by the member opposite. Over time, the member has made many, many allegations that are simply not true or not correct. He said the security costs are \$1 billion; right now, they are standing at \$239 million. He said a reception cost half a million dollars; actually, Speaker, it's five times lower. He said the budget is too high, while at the same time he is complaining that the security costs and the transportation costs are too low. The member opposite is very confusing, very conflicting. This is why I said he has zero credibility.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Speaker, that is rich coming from that minister who has zero credibility, who has seen the Pan Am budget double and has hidden multiple budgets among multiple ministries.

It's not just being on budget that eludes you, Minister, it's being on time that's also becoming an issue. To date, you have not produced a transportation plan. We asked for it in our order paper, we asked for it in question period, and you gave me your empty word that it would be completed by late 2013. Even the first vice-president of the Pan American Sports Organization has significant concerns about the traffic issues in the GTA.

You fired the secretariat's deputy minister. You fired the TO2015 CEO. Minister, you are the common denominator here. The file is still out of control, and you lack the cultural sensitivity to be the Pan Am minister. Will you step down immediately and resign today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Finance, Minister of Health, the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question. My encouragement to the member opposite: Stop bad-mouthing the games. Security and safety of the people is paramount and is on the top of my agenda. We will not compromise the safety of the people; we will protect them at any cost. Our own OPP is the lead institution on this file, partnering with the RCMP, local police forces and security firms. The latest cost estimate is \$239 million. They're working hard on this file to ensure, come 2015, Ontario will welcome all the people who come to enjoy the games.

CHILD CARE CENTRES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Education. When moms and dads of this province drop their kids off at daycare, they expect to pick them up again at the end of the day. But at least four families in less than a year have not been able to do that. Their children died at daycare. Parents expect the government to do its part to keep kids safe, and they expect to know when and where these tragedies have occurred. Speaker, can the minister tell this House how many children have died in licensed and unlicensed daycares over the past decade and, if not, why not?

Hon. Liz Sandals: There is a gap in information here, and there's a gap in information which is as frustrating to me as to anybody else in this place. Unfortunately, what we find is that when the police investigate an unfortunate death, as we have seen in a few situations this year, that information does not necessarily come back to the Ministry of Education. So I have asked my deputy—

Interjection.

Hon. Liz Sandals: It is true. She's not listening.

I have asked my deputy minister to see if there is something we can do so that we actually get the information coming back to my child care branch. At the moment, the information around child deaths and their cause does not come back to my child care branch. So I've asked my deputy to see if there is a way we can resolve this and get the information.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Back to the minister, I was listening; I'm just not hearing anything. This government is dropping the ball. Last year, the coroner investigated 220 deaths of children under the age of five. The coroner reports daycare deaths to the ministry, yet the minister can't answer questions about how many kids have died in daycares and whether that number of deaths is increasing. Speaker, the government can't just shrug its shoulders any longer. There is no excuse for not tracking deaths in this province. Will the minister explain how her department has failed to keep track of these tragedies?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I specifically did ask my officials to check last week, when the claim was made in the media that the coroner reported this information to my ministry. When we checked that, we found that that in fact is not a reporting link that currently exists. The coroner's office reports back to the police, and the police may or may not choose to report back to the Ministry of Education, which is precisely why I have asked my deputy to look into the matter and see if we can improve the reporting protocols.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Last month, I was pleased to announce that our government is now in a position to go forward with the cleanup of a contaminated waste disposal site in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

This site is the waste lagoon of the former Canadian International Paper Co. It's a mill that closed down in 1985, and it contains industrial waste that has been a concern for many of my constituents and myself for quite some time. This issue has represented a significant environmental challenge for the community and has certainly been an ongoing concern of mine as the local MPP. Can the minister explain how the MNR is taking the lead and moving forward with the cleanup of this industrial waste disposal site?

Hon. David Orazietti: The member was humble in his question, but I want to thank him, the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, for this important question. I know this is a very important issue to the member and one that he has been advocating for a positive resolution on for quite some time. We're moving forward, largely because of the leadership that he has shown on this issue.

1130

The CIP mill ceased operations in Hawkesbury in the 1980s, at a time when there were no legal requirements in place for the company to deal with the cleanup of the toxic sludge, the remnants of the operation. Fortunately, today, our province has stricter environmental regulations in place, and waste disposal sites are required by law to have an approved closure plan in place as a condition for obtaining certification.

Our government has launched phase one of the cleanup project with respect to the crown land portion of the site. This includes a two-year pilot that focused on testing in a responsible and effective way. We now have some data and information from that, which I'll share in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for that informative answer. I'm glad to hear that our government now has more stringent environmental regulations in place so that this kind of issue will not occur again in the future.

It's important to my constituents and to myself that this project be completed as soon as possible. It's great news that your ministry has made this project a priority. I'm also pleased to hear that much of the rehabilitation can be done by local contractors, which will bring jobs and create substantial economic activity in Hawkesbury and in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Could the minister please update the members of this House again on when the remediation of the waste site is scheduled to begin?

Hon. David Orazietti: I'm pleased to inform members of the Legislature that the information experience gained by MNR during the pilot will be used to finalize the design and methodology to rehabilitate this section of crown land. The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell will be happy to know that MNR is seeking a private contractor to lead the rehabilitation. I'm pleased to announce that a full-scale cleanup of this site is scheduled to begin this spring. This is a multi-million-dollar project that will run until 2016 and will include, as the member has indicated, local contractors.

The ministry is committed to providing regular community updates regarding the project to the town of Hawkesbury, and through their website, we will be doing that. Cleanup of the site will contribute to improved air and water quality, and the landfill site will become green space suitable for general recreation. Once the project has been completed, the lagoon will be opened up to the Ottawa River, providing aquatic recreation and scenic opportunities.

SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the education minister. Minister, you, your party and your Premier have been clear that extracurricular activities are crucial to students' success in our schools. Well, we agree, and we think they should be protected.

Your collective bargaining bill sits before the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, where it is entertaining over 70 amendments in attempts to appease every union from Kenora to Cornwall. In my letter to you yesterday, I made one simple request: to ensure that parents know that after the summer break, when school is back in session in September, when your government is bargaining with the teacher unions, extracurricular activities are protected. Minister, will you honour that request?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I just can't get over it. Last week in committee, this member sat there and said we had not had enough consultations on Bill 122. I have spent, and my ministry has spent, the last several months talking to unions and school boards and directors, all the people who sit at the table on collective bargaining, talking about what amendments school boards would like to see and what amendments unions would like to see.

We've worked with everybody. We've negotiated dozens of amendments, which have been agreed to by both the unions and the school boards, and he has the gall to get up and accuse us of working with people to reach agreement. I don't get it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: What the minister doesn't realize is that request came from the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, so she should get her facts straight.

We saw what happened last time you governed on a whim. Basketball and volleyball seasons were put on hold. Choirs were muted. Extra help sessions were cancelled. Debate clubs were shut down. Parents will be the first to tell you that extracurricular activities are a vital part of the school experience, and the academic, athletic and social benefits are essential to the kind of education our students deserve.

We are not prepared to leave this to chance. Will you agree to our recommendation to give parents and students the peace of mind that their rich education experience won't be held hostage at the bargaining table?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.
Minister?

Hon. Liz Sandals: This is really, really interesting, because the critic over there may not have been involved in education during the Mike Harris days. I don't know how he did this, but he has accidentally—maybe deliberately—pulled a play from the Mike Harris handbook. Mike Harris spent eight years arguing about an amendment to the Education Act to make extracurricular activities mandatory. Do you know what happened during the eight years of Mike Harris? We had more chaos and more strike days in the history of Ontario education than ever before. I am not going back to running the education system the way Mike Harris ran it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.
New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Yesterday, my colleague the MPP for London–Fanshawe and I wrote to the minister about the ongoing funding challenges facing St. Joseph's Health Care in London. Last week, Londoners watched as the political pressure and media attention around this funding shortfall forced the minister to finally take action on the unfunded mental health beds at the new forensic hospital in St. Thomas.

But the problems and cuts have continued. Can the minister answer the question we posed in our letter about whether she has a plan to prevent other cuts to front-line health care in London?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question, because I was very pleased that we are ramping up the capacity at the new regional mental health centre, the forensic mental health centre in St. Thomas. They had 80 beds before; the new facility has got 89 beds. That is often what happens when a new building is built. It's built for future expansion, and that expansion happens over time. We were planning to increase the funding, and we did, in fact, increase the funding so that more people could be served in that particular facility. That was the right thing to do. It is what was in the works anyway. I met with the CEO of St. Joe's in London, and we discussed this very issue. I will look forward to the supplementary to talk about what more we're doing at St. Joe's.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.
The member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Because of this government's choices, St. Joe's is being forced to cut 3% of its budget this year. This has meant cuts to 23 positions, including eight nurses, and the cuts may not be over yet.

Our constituents are concerned, and they want to know that this minister isn't acting when political pressure mounts. Can the minister provide assurance to the people of London that patients' needs and not political interests are driving her funding decisions?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said, I've met with the hospital CEO, Dr. Gillian Kernaghan. We discussed what changes they are making. They have assured us that patient care will not suffer as a result of this.

The member opposite knows that we are changing how we fund hospitals. We are doing it so that hospitals get funded based on the number of patients they serve. We are bringing fairness to hospital funding. That means that some hospitals are seeing an increase in their budgets; others are seeing more challenges. We are doing it in a responsible way.

The people of St. Joe's know exactly what's coming on that front, and they are, I think, doing a very good job managing the funding, given the changes in our health care system. More services are moving to the community. The member opposite knows that, yes, some people are being replaced; others are being hired. So this works both ways.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to recognize the member for—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm just waiting for you to get there so I can recognize you. The member from Simcoe North introducing a guest.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce my wife, Jane, who's in the audience today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I knew there was a reason why I wanted to wait.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'd like to thank the over 60 businesses and associations that attended the panel I hosted on the Ontario College of Trades with the member from Simcoe North last week. It's clear that the trades community is overwhelmingly opposed to this new bureaucracy that accomplishes little other than imposing another tax on tradespeople.

Some have seen their fees increase by 502%. New apprentices are targeted with annual fees. Hairdressers are targeted with fees rising from \$20 to \$130. The college netted \$84 million in its first year alone to pay for the sunshine-listeners who run it.

This is why I'm so grateful that an industry compliance officer and Interior Systems Contractors Association of Ontario union member has seen the light and signed a petition to disband the Ontario College of Trades. Jeff Koller, a previous spokesperson for the college and staffer of Ron Johnson, the current chair of the college, must have been persuaded by the compelling case made against the new bureaucracy by the panel and attendees appalled by rising fees and red tape.

I'd like to take this opportunity to applaud him for his open-mindedness and thank him for his support in dis-

banding the Ontario College of Trades by signing on to the petition to abolish it. He is truly a man of the people.

WORKTRENDS.CA

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm proud to rise today as MPP for London West to share with this House the launch of an exciting initiative in my community. Worktrends.ca will be officially unveiled tomorrow at the Student-2-Business Networking Conference in London. This innovative online resource will provide post-secondary students, employers, job seekers, employment service providers, workforce planners and others with reliable, timely and contextualized information about the local and regional labour market.

The launch of this site marks the culmination of an extensive process of research and community engagement coordinated by the London Economic Development Corp. and the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board, a process I was proud to participate in as the lead researcher.

Londoners know too well there is a need for focused government action on creating jobs through such initiatives as the job creator tax credit. But within local contexts, it's also necessary to understand current and projected skills supply and demand to ensure appropriate training and employment opportunities for job seekers, and a flexible and skilled talent pool for local and regional businesses.

Worktrends.ca is an important tool in supporting evidence-based local labour market planning and provides a possible template for province-wide replication. I invite all members to visit the site.

ATHLÈTES OLYMPIQUES

M. Phil McNeely: J'aimerais souligner ma fierté pour tous les athlètes canadiens qui ont participé aux Jeux olympiques d'hiver à Sotchi. Ils ont su dépasser leurs limites et ont pu réaliser avec brio et honneur leur rêve olympique. C'est grâce à des initiatives du gouvernement ontarien, comme le programme « Quest for Gold », qui offre du support financier aux athlètes ontariens de haute performance, que nos athlètes ont pu se dévouer aux sports qu'ils aiment.

J'aimerais féliciter, d'une façon toute spéciale, deux athlètes de ma communauté d'Ottawa-Orléans : Vincent De Haître et Ivanie Blondin. Vincent De Haître, un patineur de vitesse de longue piste, a participé cette année à ses premiers Jeux olympiques et n'est âgé que de 19 ans. Vincent a terminé en 20^e place au 1 000 mètres et au 33^e rang dans la course de 1 500 mètres.

Ivanie Blondin est aussi une patineuse de vitesse de longue piste et a participé à trois événements à Sotchi : la course de 3 000 mètres, où elle a terminé en 24^e place; le 5 000 mètres, où elle a terminé en 14^e place; et enfin, la course de poursuite par l'équipe féminine, où elle et ses collègues ont terminé au cinquième rang.

Vincent et Ivanie ont tous les deux commencé leur carrière au Club de patinage de vitesse Concorde de

Gloucester, où ils se sont entraînés ensemble pendant plusieurs années. Je me joins à la communauté d'Ottawa-Orléans pour les féliciter à nouveau de leurs accomplissements à Sotchi. Bravo.

IDIOPATHIC PULMONARY FIBROSIS

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise in the House today to commemorate two constituents from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound who recently lost their battle to a rare and fatal lung disease called idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis.

Idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, or IPF, is an irreversible and ultimately fatal illness that scars the lungs so severely that people are no longer able to breathe. IPF is a gruesome death.

Last week I received a watch list from the IPF patient group which allows all MPPs to track the disease's progression in the IPF community. I listened to each constituent's harrowing story and I heard their plea for help with accessing a life-saving drug, Esbriet, also known as pirfenidone. Esbriet is approved by Health Canada but not funded by our own Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Last week, results were released from a trial evaluating Esbriet in patients with IPF, and confirmed that the drug significantly reduced the disease's progression and improved the patients' quality of life. In a maddening twist, there are 13 European countries that fund Esbriet based on the exact same evidence provided to the Ontario drug program.

With each day that passes, another IPF patient comes closer to losing their battle to this fatal lung disease in Ontario. This is simply not right. There has to be a better way.

Mr. Speaker, it was too late for my constituents Ross Barber and Alvin Crawford Wismer, affectionately known as Wiz, but there's still time to save others suffering from IPF. It is time this government stops fighting patients and starts advocating for them by allowing affordable access to this life-saving drug.

BARBERS

Mr. Jonah Schein: Barbers in my riding of Davenport are being ticketed out of business. I've heard from barbers across the city who are concerned about recent changes to the Ontario College of Trades. Barbers now fall under the hairdresser designation. They have to be certified for thousands of dollars in a ministry-approved hairstylist program followed by thousands of hours of on-the-job training, where they have to learn how to style hair, do a perm and colour hair, among other services which they do not offer at their shops. This is the case even for barbers that have been working for decades.

Mr. Joseph Landell is one of these barbers whose livelihood is being affected. He runs a small barber shop in my riding, and he may not be able to stay in business. Mr. Landell believes that it doesn't make sense for barbers to be in the same category as hairdressers be-

cause the service they provide is different, and so is their clientele.

I understand that the Ontario College of Trades and the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities have received many complaints on this issue and that the minister has said that he would consult with barbers as to whether they should have their own designation.

Interjection: Shame on the NDP.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Shame on you. I'm speaking up for a barber in my riding.

But while these consultations are under way, enforcement officers should not be issuing tickets, nor should certified barbers be required to pay fees—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin-Caledon will come to order.

Mr. Jonah Schein: However, the city of Toronto requires barbers to have a personal service setting licence. One of the requirements for this licence is to have a certificate of qualification. This confusion has led to the city continuing to ticket barber shops, and it's hurting small business.

To date, no clarity is available, and barbers like Mr. Landell have been left without answers. Barbers in Davenport and across Toronto need a fair, prompt and affordable solution to this problem.

EARLY YEARS CENTRES

Mr. Mike Colle: Last week I had the pleasure of attending a Family Day celebration at the Ontario Early Years Centre in my riding of Eglinton-Lawrence on Dufferin Street.

For the past 10 years, the Macaulay Child Development Centre has overseen the operation of the Eglinton Lawrence Early Years Centre. This early years centre has truly been one of the community jewels in my riding. The free programs and services provided at the early years centre allow parents to play and learn with their children age six and younger in a safe and fun and learning environment, including grandparents.

The five incredible staff members, including supervisor Sandra Aretusi, facilitate programs like drama, arts and crafts and literacy development. These learning programs are critically important because of rapid brain development that occurs at this age.

Not only do these centres ease the transition for children to a schoolroom learning environment, but they help identify learning disabilities and difficulties at a very early age.

1510

Congratulations and mazel tov to all the amazing staff of the Eglinton Lawrence Early Years Centre for their hard work and unwavering dedication to our children and our great-grandchildren. It's a wonderful place. Please visit your early years centre. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure there are some great early years centres in Brantford. Go there and you'll see wonderful kids and staff. These are wonderful places. Ontario Early Years Centres: a real family place.

ROBOTICS COMPETITION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: North Bay will host the first-ever FIRST Robotics Competition to be held in northern Ontario later this month at Nipissing University. Thirty-five teams from across Ontario will be competing, bringing 1,000 students, mentors and parents to Nipissing.

The Near North Student Robotics Initiative, Team 1305, started some 14 years ago and has had tremendous success. Those students are inspired by science, technology and innovation, and, in turn, they inspire all of us.

I want to thank the volunteers, like Nancy Dewar-Stenning, Anthony and Judy Koziol, Tanya Vrebosch, Bill Ferguson, Erin Richmond and others, for their time and efforts to allow our students to compete with the best in the world. I'd also like to thank the many sponsors who pulled together to bring this event to North Bay. And I really want to thank our honorary chair, the world-renowned cartoonist and resident of our riding in Corbeil, Lynn Johnston, as well as the event co-chairs Anthony Rota and Al McDonald.

This regional, along with several others, leads to the world championship in St. Louis at the end of April. Others will be held in the coming weeks in Oshawa, Windsor and Waterloo, and I encourage members to attend in person if you can to show your support to these bright and tremendously dedicated students.

WILLS

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Recently, Speaker, I heard this question. The question that was put was, "I want to get cremated. Some of my children are in agreement with that, but some of my children are not. What should I do?" And the response that was given was, "Put it into your will."

Speaker, this was part of a town hall that I hosted recently. It was through the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee, and the topic was "powers of attorney." It was especially something that I held for the seniors in my riding, and although the main topic was powers of attorney, during the Q&A session, the vast majority of questions were actually on the issue of wills.

For me, it was very, very educational at a personal level to see the range of questions and many of the different dilemmas that modern families today are faced with and how wills can be a really, really powerful way of resolving some of these issues.

The one takeaway that I had from this town hall was that when you're thinking of wills, it's not just about seniors. It's never too early for all of us to consider writing our wills so that all our things are in order. It's a very powerful instrument to put our wishes—not just our property. What I've learned is that wills are not just about inheritance or property; it's about a range of things that you'd like to see after you're gone. So it was very educational.

All I can say is that the seniors in my riding can't wait for the next one.

TRAVIS GERRITS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I rise today to pay tribute to Milton's champion, Olympic freestyle aerial skier Travis Gerrits. Born in Milton in 1991, Travis is the reigning silver medalist from the 2013 world championships. He first emerged as a competitor of note when he was named rookie of the year in 2011.

During the 2012-13 season, he took two silver-medal positions and then won silver at the 2013 world championships. As Travis himself said, "To me, second place is a victory in my eyes (because) I qualified for the Olympics. To be honest, I couldn't be happier."

Travis's performance at the Sochi Winter Games showed him to be a great Canadian champion, remaining composed after what was, in fact, a phenomenal jump; the landing ended in a double somersault down the hill. But Travis came back to do a second preliminary-round jump with a Canadian jump—this was a full double-double—with great form and a spot-on landing that put him among the top 10 aerial Olympic skiers in the world.

More than a thousand fans packed the Milton Sports Centre to cheer Travis on. As he himself said, "I've got the most incredible family, friends and hometown of Milton. I couldn't be prouder to be Canadian right now. This is my inspiration—a town rallying behind one athlete as they chase their dream. Thank you, Milton."

On behalf of the Parliament of Ontario and the people of Milton, I'd like to say thank you, Travis Gerrits, for your dedication to hard work, commitment to excellence and your soaring into the sky. You took our hearts with you. Canada was proud of you, Ontario was proud of you, and Milton is very, very proud of you. Thank you, Travis.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Mauro assumes ballot item number 1 and Mrs. Mangat assumes ballot item number 46.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BUY IN CANADA FOR MASS TRANSIT
VEHICLES ACT, 2014LOI DE 2014 FAVORISANT L'ACHAT
DE VÉHICULES DE TRANSPORT
EN COMMUN AU CANADA

Mr. Mauro moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 168, An Act to promote the purchase of mass transit vehicles that are made in Canada / Projet de loi

168, Loi favorisant l'achat de véhicules de transport en commun fabriqués au Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Bill Mauro: This bill, Speaker, requires municipalities that receive financial assistance from the province of Ontario for the purchase of mass transit vehicles to consider only bids that meet certain conditions. Bids must conform to the rules and procedures applicable to the purchase process.

In addition, at least 60% of the portion of the bid price relating to materials, overhead, labour and profit—up from the 25% that I was proud to help achieve, Speaker—must be on account of materials, overhead, labour and profit originating in Canada. Certain production steps must also be performed in Canada.

This would result in significant job creation in Ontario and also in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

SAVING APPRENTICES' JOBS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 POUR LA SAUVEGARDE DES EMPLOIS POUR APPRENTIS

Mr. Dunlop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 169, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009 / Projet de loi 169, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2009 sur l'Ordre des métiers de l'Ontario et l'apprentissage.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: The bill will be called the Saving Apprentices' Jobs Act, 2014. Currently, regulations made under the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009, provide that the statements of membership for members of the college and the journey-person candidates class expire after one year. The act is amended to provide that such statements of membership expire only upon the issuance of a certificate of qualification to that member.

Mr. Speaker, what it amounts to is that there are some 90,000 people who could be affected by this—apprentices and people who have not written their CFQ. I would hope that this particular bill will stop at the expiry date of April 8, the formation of the Ontario College of Trades. I would hope that the whole House will support this bill on April 3, when I bring it forward. If not, I hope the Ontario College of Trades will actually make changes to this before April 3 to allow these 80,000 people in Ontario to work.

With me today, if I may, are Walter Pamich from Power-Tek in Ottawa, an electrical company; Stephen Sell from the Ontario Electrical League; and, of course, my wife, Jane, whom I'll introduce again.

1520

GREATER PROTECTION FOR INTERNS AND VULNERABLE WORKERS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 POUR UNE PROTECTION ACCURÉE DES STAGIAIRES ET DES TRAVAILLEURS VULNÉRABLES

Mr. Schein moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 170, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 170, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jonah Schein: My bill amends the act to give three classifications of individuals, often referred to as interns, rights under the Employment Standards Act. It requires employers to review with an intern their rights under the ESA, the conditions for a legal internship, hours of work and job description through a written notice form. It requires the employer to submit a copy of the written notice form to the Ministry of Labour so that data can be collected. It requires the creation of an anonymous and third party complaints system and an intern bill of rights poster for the workplace.

I'm pleased to introduce this bill and to show my support for young workers today.

1360906 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Kwinter moved first reading of the following bill: Bill Pr23, An Act to revive 1360906 Ontario Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

FIGHTING FRAUD AND REDUCING AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE RATES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 DE LUTTE CONTRE LA FRAUDE ET DE RÉDUCTION DES TAUX D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE

Mr. Sousa moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 171, An Act respecting insurance system reforms and repair and storage liens / Projet de loi 171, Loi concernant les réformes du système d'assurance et le privilège des réparateurs et des entrepreneurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I will make my statement during ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Hon. Charles Sousa: I am pleased to rise today for the introduction of the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act, 2014. This proposed act will amend several pieces of legislation, including the Insurance Act, the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Act and the Repair and Storage Liens Act, to implement important changes to Ontario's automobile insurance system. These amendments are directly targeted at reducing costs within the system, fighting fraud, and bringing down the cost of auto insurance in Ontario.

There are more than nine million drivers in Ontario, Mr. Speaker. Our government has made a commitment to keep the auto insurance system fair and affordable for them.

In August of last year, we announced our Insurance Cost and Rate Reduction Strategy, which is targeting an average of a 15% reduction in auto insurance rates within two years. We have set a target of an average of 8% reduction by August 2014, and we're on our way to achieving this target. We have already seen rates decline by nearly 5%.

The measures proposed in this bill would support our strategy by helping to reduce costs in the system and continuing to fight fraud. Auto insurance rates are directly linked to claims costs. Reducing costs and uncertainty in the system will help reduce rates for Ontario drivers.

Mr. Speaker, one of the cornerstones of this legislation is a proposal to transform the dispute resolution system, or DRS. This will help injured Ontario drivers settle disputes faster. The legislation would create a new framework for the DRS by moving responsibility for administering the system and its adjudicative process from the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, known as FSCO, to the Ministry of the Attorney General. This move would help create a more streamlined DRS, and a more streamlined DRS would help ensure that the system operates more efficiently and effectively, and remains accessible for accident victims. This is an important step towards reducing consumer frustration as well as uncertainty and costs.

Moving the DRS was one of the 28 recommendations from the dispute resolution system review. This was announced in August as part of our cost and rate reduction strategy and was led by the Honourable J. Douglas Cunningham, a former Associate Chief Justice of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. The review included comprehensive consultation, with input from 35 stakeholders, including written submissions and in-

person meetings. A second phase of consultations focused specifically on a framework for legislation included in Mr. Cunningham's interim report. The final report of the DRS review was delivered on February 18. We will consider further recommendations from this report as we continue to implement our cost and rate reduction strategy.

Mr. Speaker, this bill also proposes a number of measures to protect Ontario consumers and continue our government's crackdown on auto insurance fraud. We're helping to protect drivers by proposing to provide authority to reduce the number of days, currently at 60, within which a storer has to give notice, where required, to owners of vehicles and still claim a lien.

This legislation would also establish a transition strategy for the licensing of health service providers that bill auto insurers, and if passed, only licensed providers will get paid directly by insurers—a key anti-fraud initiative.

As well, the legislation proposes to modernize licensing and disciplinary hearings for insurance agents and adjusters. If passed, this means FSCO would have the authority to revoke or immediately suspend the licences of agents and adjusters who act improperly and put the public at risk. This is another much-needed measure that will help protect Ontario consumers.

The bill would also implement measures to reform the prejudgment interest rate on general damages for pain and suffering that are part of the bodily injury claims for motor vehicle collisions. Currently, the rate is 5% per year and is not linked to market conditions, so we're proposing to lower this interest rate by linking it to market conditions. For example, the current rate for economic damages, which is linked to the Bank of Canada interest rate, is 1.3% a year. The current high interest rate increases the cost of these bodily injury claims in the auto insurance system, which drives up costs for consumers. The current interest rate has not been updated since 1990. Linking the rate to current market conditions would help to reduce the cost of bodily injury claims in the auto insurance system.

As I mentioned earlier, higher costs in the system translate into higher auto insurance premiums for drivers, and we're committed to bringing those premiums down. Mr. Speaker, our measures to tackle fraud and reduce costs and uncertainty in the auto insurance system are working. In the six months since we introduced our cost and rate reduction strategy, rate approvals have gone down by 4.66% on average. We're on track to meet our average 8% reduction by the target date of August of this year, and by continuing to fight fraud and uncertainty, with such measures as those proposed in this bill, we're confident we'll get there.

We're also continuing to work on other major initiatives, such as exploring a province-wide approach to towing industry oversight. We want enhanced oversight that will improve road safety, protect consumers and combat fraud. Consultations are under way that bring together the right advisers and experts to identify issues, develop solutions and reach a consensus. We are aiming

to conclude these consultations and release the recommendations developed to the public within this month.

1530

We have also contracted an independent third party to report on transparency and accountability within the auto insurance system, including an assessment of efforts to date in reducing auto insurance costs and rates. An interim report is due in mid-March.

Today's package of much-needed changes to the auto insurance system is the next step in our commitment to keep fighting and keep supporting the system that is fair and affordable for Ontario drivers. I look forward to the discussion that this legislation will generate, and I appreciate the attention that I know members will give it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for responses.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to rise to speak to the legislation introduced by the Minister of Finance today. It's safe to say, from this morning's news conference, that this bill, along with a lot of other initiatives of this government, sounds nice but lacks any real substance. This government has hosted a lot of news conferences and introduced nicely titled pieces of legislation in the past year, but what have they actually accomplished? Hydro rates continue to rise; 600,000 people remain out of work. I don't imagine there's one person in here who actually thinks this government can balance the budget within the time frame they say. This truly is a government that says one thing and does the opposite.

That can certainly be said of this government's and their NDP partner's approach to auto insurance. Let's review how we got here. We all remember last year's budget process, the one where the NDP put nearly \$1 billion in additional spending on the table. The Liberals, desperate to hold on to their fragile government, couldn't bend far enough backward to accommodate them, regardless of what it cost. Key to those demands was a promise to reduce auto insurance rates by 15%. I, for one, am still waiting for my broker to come to me with a 15% discount on my policy, like most of the other people in this province. And that's the problem with this government: They're comfortable playing bumper-sticker, populist politics without paying any attention to the consequences. At the end of the day, this government can't reduce rates by 15%. It's just a fact. For every \$1 paid in premiums in parts of the GTA, \$1.26 is paid out in claims. In fact, under the watch of this government, one of the biggest insurers in the world, State Farm, recently decided that doing business in Ontario wasn't worth it and pulled out. Progressive, believe it or not, used to operate here in Ontario as well but left years ago. Minister, that's the wrong direction.

We should be building a market that companies want to come to and want to sell their products in. The more companies in a market means consumers have more choice and companies compete with each other to keep the premiums low. In the Ontario PCs' Auto Insurance Action Plan, we propose reforming the rate filing process

companies must undergo to accomplish this. So far, that proposal has gone overlooked by this government.

The reason we are here today is to address another aspect of the system that we demanded be tackled a year and a half ago, and that is the dispute resolution system. In his 2011 report, the Auditor General uncovered a 65,000-case backlog in the mediation process. This meant that someone who has disputed their claim for accident medical benefits had to wait 10 to 12 months before they could see a mediator. This not only delays vital medical coverage, but it creates an additional cost in the system that ultimately gets passed on to premium payers. What bold action will this bill take to resolve the significant and complex problems within the dispute resolution system? The government will move the dispute resolution system from its current home in the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, or FSCO, as the minister said, over to the Ministry of the Attorney General. That's right. The key message the minister wanted to get across this morning was that a largely unchanged dispute resolution behemoth will now have a different body overseeing it. I struggle to see how this creates efficiencies or reduces costs.

The PC Party has suggested opening up the mediation process to private providers. This gives more choice to claimants and allows people to see mediators immediately, instead of waiting in line. But that's not addressed here.

We also suggested a truly independent third party injury-assessment protocol in order to clarify injuries and mitigate the demands for mediation in the first place. That, too, is missing.

Speaker, this government has put forward another bill with a flowery name which lacks any real substance, something we're accustomed to seeing from this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's also my pleasure to rise on behalf of the NDP to speak in response to the minister's statement and the minister's new proposed bill.

To begin my comments, I have to say that the fact that the bill takes some steps to address fraud—and any steps in general that are rational and logical and based on evidence to address fraud are something we support. That's something that no one in this House will disagree with. We need to reduce fraud. That's absolutely something that is of no dispute or disagreement.

However, there are a number of components in this bill which need to be strengthened or need to be fleshed out more clearly. One of those is that the Cunningham report makes it clear that the dispute resolution system as it currently is, managed by FSCO, needed to be transitioned to the Ministry of the Attorney General and needed to be converted into a quasi-judicial system—yes, that's true—but the ministry has been unable to clarify how this will actually streamline the process. What mechanisms would facilitate easier access for the consumer? How would this allow greater accessibility for the Ontario driver who is seeking to resolve a dispute? That

is still yet to be fully explained by the minister or the ministry.

With respect to the other proposed changes, again, this is just another example of the government assisting the insurance companies by reducing their costs, but there is no tie between reduced costs for the insurance companies and reducing premiums for drivers.

Back in 2010, we saw one of the most colossal cuts to costs for the insurance companies by reducing the caps on statutory accident benefits. This resulted in a reduction in costs by 50% in terms of SABs. A 50% reduction in costs didn't actually bring down our premiums. So, again, these steps, which will reduce the cost for insurance companies by taking the 5% interest rate that, before, people could use when they made a claim or a lawsuit—reducing that 5% interest to 2% certainly will reduce some of the costs incurred by insurance companies, but how is that tied into some reduction of premiums for drivers?

Looking at the current system around the storage of vehicles and reducing the amount of days that a vehicle can be stored, and looking at the notice requirements, that would reduce costs for the insurance companies, certainly, because it's not the Ontario driver who pays those costs. But where is the guarantee that these reductions to the costs incurred by insurance companies will actually be tied to reductions in premiums? That's the component that has been lacking from 2010 to present.

I've been calling for reductions in costs to insurance companies needing to be tied to guaranteed reductions in premiums. That's something that's been missing and that's something I call on this ministry to do.

Again, there needs to be a re-evaluation of the priorities. Are we putting Ontario drivers, the consumers—the people who are having difficult times making ends meet—as a priority? Or are we putting, simply, the costs incurred by insurance companies as the priority? I question the priorities of this government when it comes to that.

The other issue—I think this is something that we really need to focus on and the government has indicated they're going to take some steps on, but I implore the government to make this a priority: To get to the bottom of the insurance industry or the insurance issue here in Ontario, we need to have a transparent and accountable way to look at the profits that the insurance industry is enjoying.

1540

The profit and the profitability is something where, if you ask the industry, they come up with a completely different number, and if you look at the evidence that we have in terms of the loss ratio—and I respectfully disagree with my colleague from the Conservative Party. In fact, the loss ratios are some of the best loss ratios that insurance companies have enjoyed in years. They're actually seeing that they are taking in much more premium than they are paying out in terms of payouts. So the loss ratios are excellent. The returns on investment, in terms of the insurance companies, are also in the plus. If

you look at those two scenarios, you're seeing insurance companies that are enjoying profits.

But this fact that's in dispute needs to be resolved by an independent body. We need a panel that can come down and give us a clear picture of what the profitability is so that we, as legislators, can then make the right decisions in terms of how the rates should be set.

Again, we need to stop making the priority the insurance industry and instead make the priority the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements. It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario health insurance plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease in Ontario and to have everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I affix my name in support.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"December 9, 2013, was a precedent-setting day in this Legislature for Ontario's most vulnerable citizens. Premier Kathleen Wynne gave a heartfelt and official

apology challenging all Ontarians 'to be led by our sense of moral purpose before all else' when she publicly, on behalf of the people of Ontario, took responsibility for the profound suffering of the former residents of Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres 'who were deeply harmed and continue to bear the scars and the consequences.'

"Whereas the institutional model of care at each of these centres has been acknowledged in the public apology to have been deeply flawed whereby residents 'suffered neglect and abuse within the very system that was meant to provide them care'; and

"Whereas it was acknowledged that former residents 'were forcibly restrained, left in unbearable seclusion, separated from their families and robbed of their potential, their comfort, safety and their dignity'; and

"Whereas all of the class actions for former residents at Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres have reached settlement agreements with the province for a combined total of \$67.7 million; and

"Whereas a \$67.7-million settlement is wholly inadequate as compensation to the thousands of former residents and their families to redress the long-term debilitating impact of this harm; and

"Whereas all legal costs of \$15.6 million are being taken from the combined settlement total before any compensation is paid to the former residents;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that Premier Kathleen Wynne be led by her sense of moral purpose and use her power as Premier to pay the legitimate legal costs of Koskie Minsky LLP from Toronto who acted on behalf of the Huronia, Southwestern and Rideau Regional Centre class members, from sources over and above the combined \$67.7-million settlement."

I affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Jaclyn.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: This is from my residents of Ajax-Pickering.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham are at the final stages of completing an EA for the YD-WPCP (York Durham water pollution control plant's) outfall; and

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham have chosen as the final solution an alternative which will not address the quantity of total phosphorous (TP) nor soluble reactive phosphorous (SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario; and

"Whereas Lake Ontario has been identified as the most stressed lake of the Great Lakes in the July/August 2013 issue of Canadian Geographic; and

"Whereas the town of Ajax and PACT POW (Pickering Ajax Citizens Together—Protecting Our Water) have documented the excessive algae blooms on the Ajax

waterfront with photos and complaints to the region of Durham; and

"Whereas SRP, and indirectly TP, contribute to the growth of algae in Lake Ontario;

"Therefore we undersign this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and ask that the government of Ontario require the regions of York and Durham to implement an alternative that will reduce the amount of phosphorous being deposited into Lake Ontario from the YD-WPCP."

I attach my name to that as I agree with it, Madam Speaker, and I pass it on to Michael.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicles' emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2013 that they are, in fact, no longer among the major domestic emitters of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicles' emissions were, in fact, a result of factors other than the Drive Clean Program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission control technologies; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test no longer assesses tailpipe emissions but instead scans the on-board diagnostic systems of vehicles, which already perform a series of continuous and periodic emissions checks; and

"Whereas this new emission test has caused numerous false fails, which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unneeded economic hardship and stress; and

"Whereas the Auditor General has found the program to be not effective with current technologies and has suggested that the government phase it out. On top of the program's ineffectiveness the Auditor General found the program started turning an illegal profit of almost \$19 million annually since 2011, something the program has done through unnecessary tests and fees;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows: That the government must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean Program and its illegal profiting."

I agree with this and will send it to the table with Thomas.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Ebriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I agree with this, Speaker, and will send it down with Jessie.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have yet another petition signed by hundreds of people from my riding and addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario's newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year; and

"Whereas the Ontario College of Trades has no clear benefit and no accountability as tradespeople already pay for licences and countless other fees to government; and

"Whereas Ontario has struggled for years to attract people to skilled trades and the planned tax grab will kill jobs, and drive people out of trades;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

1550

I support this petition, and I'll sign it and send it with the page to the desk.

LCBO OUTLET

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have a petition today in concert with the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the LCBO is opening a new location in Lindsay at Kent Street and requesting closure of the town's original location at Russell Street; and

"Whereas we the residents, with the support of current and past MPPs, councillors, BIA and other local businesses and we, the undersigned, request the province of Ontario to encourage the LCBO to leave our downtown LCBO in place for our residents and a large number of tourists;

"Therefore, we recommend the LCBO reconsider and leave our Russell store open as a pilot project to assist the business areas and maintain jobs in Lindsay."

I shall attach my name to that and pass it to Samer.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas this intended revenue-neutral program has turned into a profit-making tax the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled unlawful;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to eliminate the Drive Clean program."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Emily to take to the table.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the McGuinty-Wynne government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I will pass it on to page Ella.

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas cystic fibrosis is a multi-system genetic disease primarily affecting the lungs and digestive system;

"Whereas one in every 3,600 children born in Canada has cystic fibrosis, making it the most common fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children and young adults;

"Whereas there is no cure for cystic fibrosis, but the drug Kalydeco is the first medication that has shown success in targeting the underlying genetic cause of cystic fibrosis for patients with the specific G551D mutation;

"Whereas this drug helps improve the function of the defective protein, leading to better lung function, weight gain, and lower sweat chloride levels and access to Kalydeco could lead to a healthier, longer life;

"Whereas Kalydeco has been approved by Health Canada, but the approximately \$300,000 annual cost makes it an unaffordable treatment option for the overwhelming majority of Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care take immediate action to expedite listing Kalydeco on the province's drug formulary so this treatment is available to Ontario families."

I certainly agree with this petition and I will sign it.

LCBO OUTLET

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the LCBO is opening a new location in Lindsay at Kent Street and requesting closure of the town's original location at Russell Street; and

"Whereas we the residents, with the support of current and past MPPs, councillors, BIA and other local businesses and we, the undersigned, request the province of Ontario to encourage the LCBO to leave our downtown LCBO in place for our residents and a large number of tourists;

"Therefore, we recommend the LCBO reconsider and leave our Russell store open as a pilot project to assist the business areas and maintain jobs in Lindsay."

I'll hand that to page Jaclyn.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with new membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government stop their job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

I agree with this and will send it to the table with Nik.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients receive only 0.185 cents a kilometre for medical travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government reimburses its employees at the rate of 0.44 cents a kilometre; and

"Whereas the government of Canada allowed 0.575 cents a kilometre for medical travel for 2011, when calculating your medical claim on your tax return;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to re-evaluate the travel allowance allowed for recipients of ODSP, to reflect more accurately the present costs of transportation."

I sign my name and give this to page Sarah.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO IMMIGRATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'IMMIGRATION EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 25, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 161, Loi portant sur l'immigration en Ontario et apportant une modification connexe à la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Todd Smith: It seems like it was a month ago that we were debating this bill—it was last month, actually—Bill 161, the Ontario Immigration Act. I believe, in my remarks when I previously spoke about this new legislation that the relatively new Minister of Citizenship and Immigration put on the table, we were talking about the fact that what this legislation is doing, although it's a pretty good piece of legislation—there's some tinkering that could be done to it—is putting the cart before the horse. There were a lot of things that needed to happen in Ontario before this would actually be an effective piece of legislation, Madam Speaker. I recall you were in the chair that Tuesday morning when I was talking about it.

What this legislation is aiming to do is bring some more economic immigration to the province and crack down on immigration fraud that may be occurring—one of the items that we didn't get a chance to speak of when we were discussing this on the very first day. But there are a number of messages that I did want to get across in the remaining 20 minutes or so that I have left in my lead on Bill 161. So we'll get right down to the heart of the matter.

When we were last discussing this topic, we were talking about the push and pull factors attached to immigration and what makes new Canadians want to settle here in Ontario, a place that used to be the first choice of new Canadians. Ontario used to be the first choice, but

now the other provinces have gotten their acts together, and there are other very legitimate choices for newcomers to Canada.

Approximately 51% of immigration to Ontario falls into the economic immigration category. That's the lowest of any Canadian province. The national average for economic immigration, across Canada's provinces, is approximately 70%. So we're almost 20 percentage points below that. One explanation for this very well could be the lower employment rate for new Canadians in Ontario, which currently sits at 75.4%. That's according to the Centre for Immigration and Community Services. This number is well below that of provincial leaders Alberta and Manitoba, who have employment rates for new Canadians in excess of 82%. That was one of the themes that I spoke of when I opened my remarks, that there was more opportunity for new Canadians to actually get a job—and their ultimate goal when they decided to move to this country was to get a job so that they could support their family and raise a family in our great country and our great province. They're still doing it in our great country, but their first choice isn't necessarily Ontario any longer.

According to Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration stats from late 2010, the number of federal skilled worker applicants landing in Ontario has fallen 57% under the watch of this government. Let me repeat that again. The number of federal skilled worker applicants landing in Ontario has fallen 57% under the watch of the Dalton McGuinty-Kathleen Wynne Liberal government here.

1600

As Ontario's economic prospects have declined under the current government, we've actually seen years where Ontario was surpassed in the number of total landed federal skilled worker applicants by Quebec. One new Canadian once described landing in Canada and landing a job here as "scratching a lottery ticket." You didn't know if you were going to be able to get employment in Ontario. You certainly can't say the same thing when you land at the airport in Saskatchewan.

What we often forget is that immigration is the fulfillment of a dream. It's often not a selfish dream, as I alluded to earlier. Our new Canadians are often coming to Ontario with the belief that they can make a better life for their spouse or their children or their siblings or their parents. We don't have the kind of reflective romanticism in immigration that we once had here in Ontario. We no longer have the O'Tooles that were coming here, fleeing the potato famine back in the day with nothing more than the clothes on their back. We no longer have the Fedelis coming from Italy, landing at Pier 21. The arrivals concourse at Pearson here in Toronto or Mirabel or Ottawa—Macdonald-Cartier—removed some of the romantic imagery from our history. But it hasn't removed the importance that immigration will play in our future both as a province and as a nation.

Ontario, as we all know, has an aging population. As the minister quite correctly pointed out in his remarks, that number is going to get significantly larger. In 20

years, roughly a quarter of Ontario's population will be over the age of 65. Ontario has, as recently as last year, lost thousands of members of its working-age population to Alberta; that's according to the Ministry of Finance. That's largely due to a lack of opportunity and a lack of economic prospects in Ontario.

I want to point out again, Madam Speaker, that those numbers aren't being picked out of the air. Those numbers are coming from the government's own ministry offices, and that number that I just shared comes from the Ministry of Finance office.

In 2012, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants produced a survey on the services aiding immigrants in Ontario, and in it are some facts that bear out what we've been discussing here. Some 80% of new Canadians in Ontario stay in their first city of residence. However, of the 20% who relocate from their first city of residence, the largest percentage do so because they're seeking better employment opportunities. I think the numbers speak for themselves here in Ontario. The opportunity doesn't exist here that once did.

According to a study prepared by TD Economics, Ontario lost approximately 18,000 people to interprovincial migration in 2012. That's 18,000 people who were here in Ontario, Madam Speaker, who decided that they were going to move to another province in Canada because they had a better opportunity to work or a better job was available to them. That wasn't a long time ago; that was just over a year ago, in 2012. That number is almost three times the next-highest province. A full 61% of those leaving Ontario for another province are ending up in British Columbia, Alberta or Saskatchewan. Why are they going there? I think we all know the answer. That number, too, is higher than any other province in eastern or central Canada.

It's not just new Canadians who are leaving Ontario to go west because there's opportunity. I know that when I was a young guy growing up in New Brunswick—and I brought up several stories from my days in New Brunswick when I first spoke on this a week ago. But you can look within our caucus here, and how many of our caucus members have youngsters who have moved out west because there's more opportunity there? I talk to people all the time, whether I'm at the rink or at the shopping mall or the grocery store, and they say, "Todd, when are you guys going to start to create some jobs here in Ontario?" Because I have young daughters who are going through high school, or they're going through university, and I don't want them to have to go Alberta. I would love for them to get a job here in Belleville or Bancroft or Quinte West or Prince Edward county. But so many of them aren't getting the chance to work in this province, and they're leaving to go to other provinces, or other countries, for that matter, around the world.

TD also indicated that a large part of the migration to other provinces was the per capita value of income in Ontario, which has slid dramatically since 2010, when it was above the provincial average. It's now below the provincial average. Prosperity fuels immigration, and

that's the problem that Ontario is currently having. When we were prosperous not so long ago, we were attracting more new Canadians to Ontario. The finance ministry's own numbers bear this out. From 1997 until approximately 2002, this province experienced one of the greatest booms in immigration that we've seen in the last 40 years. It also happened to coincide with one of the greatest periods of economic prosperity this province has seen in that same time frame. It was a time when a PC government created a million jobs in this province.

Is it just a coincidence that people decided to move here when that was occurring in Ontario? People go where the jobs are, Madam Speaker. As we see plant after plant leaving Ontario—and we've seen them in all of our ridings, picking up and moving to lower-cost jurisdictions. I've had the Sears call centre close in Belleville. There have been numerous other plants. I sit right next to the member who represents Leamington, and what's happened in one of his municipalities that he represents in his riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex? I look over and I see members from London, and what's happened in London? We have members here from Peterborough. One of the highest unemployment rates in the entire province is in Peterborough. There are members here from Windsor. Their manufacturing sectors have been hollowed out. Why would we expect people to come to Ontario when the opportunity isn't here?

But it doesn't have to be that way, and it can get better. We didn't just discover oil in Alberta a couple of years ago. We've managed to be prosperous in Ontario while western Canada has prospered. Our prosperity and our future do not need to come at their expense, and their prosperity is not coming at ours. One of the largest mineral deposits in the world can be opened in the Ring of Fire. We've heard about it for years. Is anything happening on it? I don't think so. When new Canadians talk about coming here, it's the job that they want, it's the future that they want for their family that brings them here. That's why they come. The dream is Canada; it's Ontario. It's not just about Toronto.

When the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants did their study, the number one concern that they identified among new Canadians was unemployment. Almost 62% of new Canadians identify employment as their biggest concern—62% of new Canadians identify employment as their biggest concern. It's a huge concern in Ontario right now, and not just among new Canadians. But when new Canadians are saying that that's one of their largest concerns, then it's a problem when we're trying to attract newcomers to our province.

What OCASI has found is that new Canadians moving to small towns have actually reported the best chance of finding a job. So when we talk about opening up the Ring of Fire as a way of creating jobs and as a way of attracting more immigrants to our shores, the evidence bears out that it very much has the potential to do that.

This bill does some good things, as I've said before. By making the amendments that it proposes to the Regulated Health Professions Act, this bill will hopefully

clear up some of the credentialing problems that we've been encountering in Ontario. I spoke about some of those issues at length and some issues that we've been having in Prince Edward-Hastings, in particular at our local hospitals with pediatricians. But I've spoken with so many families here in the Peel region and in the GTA where, when they left their home country, whether it be India or Poland or Scotland, they believed that they had an opportunity when they landed at Pearson international that they were going to have a job. They had a status, they had a number when they left, but when the plane's wheels touched the ground on the tarmac at Pearson, they themselves told me that their number went right back to zero and they had to start from scratch. It's a shame.

1610

Another study by OCASI showed that almost two thirds of new Canadians come to Ontario having at least completed trade school. We need to get those new Ontarians into jobs where they're best able to use their skills, but we also have to have jobs available for them. We can reform the system as much as we want, but until we have the jobs, we don't have the answer.

What has this government been doing to create jobs? As we just heard a number of times while members were reading petitions, they're actually hurting job creation in the province of Ontario. You heard the "Stop the Trades Tax" petitions, Madam Speaker—abolish the College of Trades. We're bringing in legislation, and we've brought in legislation over the last 10 years under this government, that's killing job opportunities for newcomers to Canada. It's killing job opportunities for those who are already here. The College of Trades is not creating jobs in the province; it's a job killer.

There are other pieces of legislation that we're currently debating that are job killers as well, like the Waste Reduction Act. That's a job killer. It's another huge tax.

The government has proposed an Ontario pension plan that will kill small businesses in the province of Ontario. It will suck money out of our economy—millions and millions of dollars out of our economy. That will kill jobs in Ontario, yet they continue to talk about these types of legislation.

They continue to talk about raising the gas tax. I don't know what the gas prices were, Madam Speaker, when you drove in this morning from north of the Toronto area, but in the Quinte area, they were at \$1.30 a litre over the weekend. And they want to add another 10 cents a litre on top of that? That is not going to create jobs in Ontario; it's going to kill jobs.

Back to the point that I'm speaking of: This government is doing everything it can to slow down job creation in Ontario. If we want to attract new Canadians, if we want to attract new workers to Ontario—and we desperately need those new workers—then we need to create a climate in Ontario where job creators can create jobs.

Over the last many weeks, we've been subject to a constant barrage of images coming from Ukraine. We've watched as thousands of Ukrainians have taken to the

streets, day and night, to clamour for their rights. They long for the right to assemble, to speak freely and to have a future that they determine for themselves. They've been demanding it now for weeks, and there has been bloodshed. They've been willing to die for it, and many of them have died. For hundreds of thousands of Ontarians of Ukrainian ancestry, what's going on right now hits very close to home because it recalls the very things that drove their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents here to Ontario.

The extent of what we offer as a province isn't always measured by a bank account or by a job posting. Sometimes the symbols of our hope are far more simple. Sometimes it's something as simple as not having to worry about a boot crashing through a door in the middle of the night. Sometimes it's the peace of mind of actually being able to trust the people in uniform that you pass on the street. It's the ability to go to a store and see bread on the shelf. For more than 100 years, the freedom that we offer in Ontario has run deep, and we've worn it proudly around the world.

We used to be the place where new Canadians wanted to come. They didn't even have to do their research; they knew that Ontario was where they were going to be able to create a future for their family, get a good job and put their kids through school so that they could become valued citizens in our country and in our province. But sadly, as these numbers that I've just put on the table point out, Ontario is no longer that sought-after destination. More and more people are choosing the western provinces. More and more people are choosing Quebec. And sadly, as I pointed out, the root for this is the fact that this government has mismanaged our economy so badly that there is not the opportunity here for newcomers in Ontario.

We can look at all of the different pieces of legislation. I outlined a few already. We haven't even touched on the electricity rates in Ontario. But honestly, in my previous role as small business and red tape critic, when I was doing my round tables across the province, the number one issue that I heard about was the rising cost of electricity. There's no end in sight when it comes to electricity.

There is an end in sight, though. There is an end in sight to all of these job-killing pieces of legislation that we've seen in Ontario, and it's going to come in the form of a provincial election.

I know there are a lot of new Canadians who are watching the legislative channel. They're following along with the debates that are going on here because when I'm out in the communities, I'm hearing from them. I'm listening to them, and I'm hearing what they're saying. They're talking to me about red tape. They're talking to me about the cost of electricity. They're talking to me about taxes. They're talking to me about the fact that when they get here, they can't get their equivalency. They can't get their credentials certified despite the fact that they have years and years of experience in their professional field.

I'm trying not to be too critical of this bill because it's not a bad bill. There are some points in here that actually come right from our immigration policy, to be quite honest. There is one item, though, that is a bit concerning. There is an area that we do need to crack down on. There is such a thing as immigration fraud that's out there. But I take exception to or at least question the idea—the government is saying that this will be a revenue-neutral program. It's almost laughable that they would say that, given their track record when it comes to new bureaucracies that are full of inspectors. They are going to have to hire some inspectors to crack down on immigration fraud, but I think that the idea that it's not going to cost money is a little bit far-fetched coming from this government. Ontario is also striving to get its share of provincial nominee program spots, but I don't think we're going to be able to do it until we prove to the federal government and until we prove to Ontarians that we can get the economy moving again so that we can prove to job creators and investors in Ontario that we do have our fundamentals right: that we have low taxes, that we have low electricity, that we have cut the red tape burden in the province of Ontario and that we're not hitting investors in the wallet every time they turn around.

We have to create that environment so that jobs exist so that newcomers, when they come to Ontario, want to make this their home. We can do it again. Tim Hudak put his plan on the table just last Thursday. It was voted against by other members of the Legislature. That would have been a good start and a good message to send people right around the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to thank the member for Prince Edward–Hastings for his comments. I wasn't here to listen to the first part of his lead, but I did listen intently to the final 20 minutes of his speech.

I want to say, as the member for London West, that this is a very important issue in my community. Some MPPs may not be aware that London is the number one destination for refugee claimants in this province. London is also a key secondary settlement location once immigrants have exhausted their CEC money.

The member for Prince Edward–Hastings spoke at some length about jobs and the need to support newcomers in gaining employment and entering the labour force. I wanted to share with members some comments that were made to me during a recent meeting with WIL Employment Connections in my community of London, which recently received the Ontario Award for Leadership in Immigrant Employment.

Many issues were raised by WIL around some of the barriers to employment for newcomers. For example, immigrants have to be in receipt of EI in order to access any kind of employment training. We know that those who are not in receipt of EI actually have the largest barriers.

1620

There is also a systemic focus with the MTCU on any job, not the quality of the job, so the program does not

recognize that it may take longer to work with immigrant professionals to get them into the workforce and that finding an internationally trained engineer a job at Tim Hortons is not success. We need to help internationally trained professionals find employment in occupations that match their credentials.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to stand in support of Bill 161. The bill is the beginning, not the end. I'm very pleased to hear the last few minutes of the remarks of the member from Prince Edward–Hastings speaking in support of the bill.

We know that the diversity of this province and the immigration of this province make our province strong and prosperous. I know that in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, the proposed legislation will be welcomed.

First of all, the proposed legislation addressed the following: It put necessary tools to help Ontario welcome the new skilled immigrants it needs to help the future labour force. The other thing is that we also talk about compliance and enforcement, as I believe the member opposite did mention in his remarks about the bill. It will also make the bill more transparent in terms of sharing information in terms of the immigration selection.

I know that everybody in this House recognizes the importance of immigration to this great province, because immigration shaped the staples of this province in terms of ensuring great public education, the quality of the health care that we have currently, the skills training and the infrastructure renewal, but more importantly, to have the dynamic economic force, because we are living in a very global, diverse community, and we welcome everyone in our province. The proposed legislation is one part of the government's initiative in terms of economic plans, creating new jobs for today and for tomorrow as well.

I'm pleased to hear that my colleague opposite is supportive of this bill, and I will look forward to more conversations about this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a pleasure to stand and comment on the well-spoken and well-researched presentation from my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings. He speaks with passion when he talks about the need for immigration in this great province and this great country of ours.

There are some issues that we do have with regard to this bill, but to cut to the chase, I am pleased to say that I will be supporting this bill, and I'm sure that the rest of my colleagues will be supporting this bill as well.

I look at the great riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex. We have people who have decided to settle in the Chatham–Kent–Leamington area for many, many reasons. Back in the day when this province was known to be called the land of milk and honey, these people came. There were jobs. They were welcome. They were loved. They

grouped together and kept their culture. I've had the pleasure of going out throughout my riding on many different occasions and attending different cultural festivities that these people put on, and I am just absolutely thrilled as I learn more about these people.

Now, unfortunately, there's a sad part to this. The sad part is that the land of milk and honey is now the land where the milk has soured and the honey has gotten hard. We need to change that and we need to encourage immigrants to still come here, but in order to encourage that, there need to be jobs, something that this government has put on the back burner.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad that I'm here to contribute towards the debate from the member for Prince Edward–Hastings on Bill 161, Ontario Immigration Act. I understand that it's been a long time coming—that this act has finally been brought to the Legislature. I understand that in the last 13 years there hasn't been any movement on an immigration bill to come to Ontario and promote more new immigrants, more new Canadians coming to Ontario so that we can grow and thrive. People coming from different countries add a different flavour to Ontario. We talked about diversity and all the cultural customs and traditions that they bring in order to enhance our lives as well.

This bill is saying that we want more new Canadians to come to Ontario, but we also have to remember that the federal government has to buy into that process that we are talking about today. Without that support, I don't know how far this bill will go. Right now, I understand that we have about 2,000 new Canadians that come to Ontario, and I heard that Manitoba, for example, has 5,000. So what is Manitoba doing right? What are they doing right to attract new Canadians? We need to look at what supports we need to attract new Canadians here. We need to have good, strong supports, as the member from London West mentioned. Literacy training—making sure that we have those things so that people can stay in Ontario when they come here and actually have a viable living and contribute back.

The other part I was very interested in talking about as well is the credential piece. It's great to have new Canadians here, but when there are doctors and lawyers driving cabs or working at Tim Hortons, that is not a productive way to use those skill sets that people bring to our country.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Prince Edward–Hastings has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the members of the Legislature who have commented as well: my friend from Chatham–Kent–Essex and the member from Scarborough–Agincourt and the two members from the London area over in the NDP. I appreciate the remarks made by the member from London–Fanshawe. She talked about the fact that this piece of legislation has been a long time coming and that things have been stalled. That has been a general theme

that we've seen from this government: that things aren't getting done. When I referenced the fact that we're waiting for jobs to be created, they've stalled on a jobs plan in spite of what we've done, moving legislation through so that we could see a jobs plan from this government. But the pieces of legislation that they continue to bring forward are job-killing pieces of legislation, not job-creation pieces of legislation. We need to move on the million jobs plan that our leader, Tim Hudak, put out there last week that was defeated by the other members of the Legislature. It would have done a lot of good things when it comes to increasing the number of people working in our skilled labour force.

When you look at the numbers that I shared earlier, the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration states—this is from the minister's own office. In late 2010, the number of federal skilled worker applicants landing in Ontario fell 57% under the watch of this government. Why have they dropped? It's because there's not a job for them when they get here. Then when they do get here now, they're hit with a College of Trades that's slamming them over the head with a new tax and is doing everything besides create more opportunity in this province.

I thank all of the members. I thank the minister for bringing forward this piece of legislation. Although it's a fine piece of legislation, they have to get their economic fundamentals right over there, and they're showing no signs of being able to do that. We need to create jobs so that newcomers to Canada will have an opportunity to work when they get here.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It is a delight to stand up here today. I've been waiting for this day for 13 long years. That's how long I've been here in this House—13 long years—waiting for the first immigration bill to actually be called before the House. I've asked my colleagues, including the member from Trinity-Spadina, who has been here 23 years and who was the immigration critic before me and was in the Rae government as well—I asked whether he remembered an immigration bill being brought before this House in 23 years, and he couldn't remember one either.

Here is Ontario. This is a proud day for me to stand up here and actually talk about this bill, what is contained within the bill, what ought to be in the bill, how improvements can be made to the bill, and any number of things.

Before I do that, though, I would like to thank Minister Sousa. I would like to thank him not only for the courage of finally bringing something forward in this House but for making his staff available to me to answer, I think, what were very tough questions that I put to them around this bill about some of the shortfalls that I see in the bill.

1630

I want to thank them as well for the candour with which they spoke and giving the answers that they did, because it's not always easy to answer my questions. I acknowledge that. But they did answer it with some considerable candour, and sometimes they just wouldn't tell

me. They wouldn't tell me because I guess they didn't like the direction I was going in, but in any event, they set the framework going so that I could think about this bill over the weeks since the minister stood in his place.

Did I say Minister Sousa earlier?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes.

Mr. Michael Prue: Minister Coteau. I'm very, very sorry. Correct that. It's Minister Coteau—the candour with which he spoke and how he spoke and the opportunity to reflect on that.

I did do five minutes on the first day, and I did outline on that day some of the difficulties I foresaw in the bill and how I thought the bill was timid. I have not changed my mind since that time. But I want to state that—

Mr. Jim Wilson: A point of order, Madam Chair.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pardon me. Sorry. Point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I do apologize to the honourable member from the New Democratic Party, Mr. Prue, but I don't believe we have a quorum in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is there a quorum?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is present.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We go back to the member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much to my honourable colleague for bringing that information forward. I like to think that when I make a speech, especially in full flight, that there are at least 12 members in the House to hear it, so I thank you very much for your intervention there.

Part of my questions to the staff all those many weeks ago was about Ontario's role in immigration and why we had been so timid for so many years in the face of what other provinces were doing.

And I asked them a very frank question about the British North America Act, which is probably not on the top of anyone's radar in this room. But the British North America Act, in section 95, at the time of Confederation set out the jurisdictions of the federal government and the jurisdictions of the province. There were two shared jurisdictions. One of them was agriculture, and we make no bones in this province about having a Minister of Agriculture. In fact, the Premier is the Minister of Agriculture. And we understand that there is a federal Minister of Agriculture with equal responsibilities in Ottawa.

The other jurisdiction that is shared is immigration, and most Ontarians, and most members of this Legislature, would probably be surprised to know that we have equal jurisdiction with the federal government in immigration, but we have never chosen to exercise in it any year since Confederation.

Now, a lot of things have happened since Confederation. The west was populated, mostly with eastern European peoples who came over to an untamed land and

who built sod houses. Some 500,000 and more immigrants came to Canada in those years, and it was largely done through federal intervention. However, the provinces, or the territories, as they then were, were clamouring and asking and setting the limits and bringing in trainload after trainload of immigrants to settle that land, and that happened.

So we have section 95 of the British North America Act. Every single province in Canada has taken advantage of that, and Ontario has joined them only today—only today.

The last time, when I stood in this House, I talked about the Quebec immigration act. I mistakenly gave a date of 1973. I've since done some research—that was off the top of my head—and it was 1978, so I'm out by five years and I apologize to the House for having said that.

In 1978, the immigration act of Quebec was proclaimed and it was accepted by Canada. At that time, Quebec determined that it was going to run its own immigration system, as the law allows. Since that time, the Quebec immigration act has been amended dozens of times but it still maintains the same things.

I'd just like to read into the record some of the things that Quebec has been able to do for the last 36 years, which we will not be able to do even if we pass this bill. Even if we pass the bill, we will not be able to match what Quebec does in choosing immigrants, in making sure they are settled, in making sure that there is no fraud and all the things that might be talked about in terms of this bill.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to need my glasses because this is in pretty tiny print. This is my immigration act with all the related statutes. You might wonder why a person would have this. I am the critic, but I also worked in the Department of Immigration, as many of you would know, for some 20 years before becoming the mayor of East York. I had to know most of this stuff pretty well.

The immigration-to-Quebec act, as I said, came to be in 1978 by an act of Quebec. I think the important thing I need to read into the record is what Quebec has been able to do since 1978, which, even if we pass this bill, we still won't be able to do.

It says in division II:

“Selection of foreign nationals

“3. The selection of foreign nationals wishing to settle permanently or temporarily in Quebec is effected within the framework of government policy concerning immigrants and foreign nationals. The selection is intended, in particular,

“(a) to contribute to the enrichment of the socio-cultural heritage of Quebec, to the stimulation of its economic development and to the pursuit of its demographic objectives;

“(b) to facilitate the reuniting, in Quebec, of Canadian citizens and permanent residents with their close relatives from abroad;

“(c) to enable Quebec to assume its share of responsibilities regarding the reception of refugees and other persons in a particularly distressful situation;

“(d) to favour the coming, among foreign nationals who apply therefor, of persons who will be able to become successfully established in Quebec;

“(e) to facilitate the conditions of the stay in Quebec of foreign nationals wishing to study, work temporarily or receive medical treatment, having regard to the reasons for their coming and the capacity of Quebec to receive them.”

It goes on to talk about—I'm not going to quote the rest—the selection activities, the fact that Quebec will post the number of immigrants they are going to accept every year and that this will be generally known to the people of Quebec.

The rest of the bill talks about people coming here and how they will be settled and how much money Quebec will spend. It talks about how Quebec will make sure that they are integrated into the broader community. It even talks about how their foreign credentials are going to be recognized.

Thirty-six years and we did nothing in this province—I'm not blaming just this government; there were other governments before—36 years we had a template, and 36 years we didn't do anything with it.

Now, since that time, other provinces have jumped on board. Every single province has signed or did sign an agreement with the federal government to try to bring in immigrants in particular classes that would help those respective provinces. Each province was able to get on board but we did not.

I remember having a classic debate in this very place with the then member from Vaughan, the Honourable Greg Sorbara, as he was then known. He was asking that Ontario wanted more share for settlement of immigrants in Ontario and we didn't think—since we were taking at that point more than 50% of the immigrants—that we were getting 50% of the settlement funds. I stood here and debated with him for some period of time that why we weren't getting 50% of the funds was because we weren't doing 50% of the work. We weren't doing all of the things that Quebec was doing. We weren't even doing the things that Manitoba or New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island or British Columbia or Alberta or Saskatchewan were doing. We weren't doing those things.

1640

There was a very simple reason for all of that: Most of the immigrants were choosing to come to Ontario. In those days, 60% of the immigrants came to this place because this was the place where their families lived, where they were nominated and sponsored from, and they came here because this was the place where they could settle and where they would have some form of family support. It was very reasonable and rational why Ontario did not want to be involved in the game. The immigrants came here anyway, and most of them came in a class that no longer exists, having been sponsored by close relatives or nominated by those relatives who were one degree or so removed.

So Ontario didn't need to be in the game and in fact did not need to be in the game until about 10 or 15 years

ago when things started to shift quite radically. They shifted radically because Canada, in its wisdom, determined that we wanted a different class of immigration. We no longer wanted people to come here just because they had close family members in order to settle here. They decided that immigration had to help Canada and each of the provinces in terms of their respective economies, and they started to look for people who had qualifications.

I know they started to look even for people who had no qualifications who had money, and we came up with the whole thing called the entrepreneur class, where people had to have \$1 million in order to come to Canada to create at least three jobs. If you ever wondered why a whole lot of offshore money came, it's because Canada determined that we would take immigrants who had economic expertise and would come forward to Canada to create these kinds of jobs.

I remember that quite distinctly because it was my privilege in those days—I went for about, I think, six months to Ottawa, and I helped to write the manual chapter on how new immigrants could be chosen from the entrepreneur class. We were particularly looking for those places in Asia, some of the developing markets in Taiwan and Singapore and those places, but we were also looking afield to some of the places where entrepreneurs could come from France and England and Europe, who may want to come here and establish businesses.

We also started to look, at that time, at the skilled immigrant class, and we started to look at, did we need carpenters and machine lathe operators and people who had a skilled trade? We determined that, yes, we did. The success of those classes led to changes in the Immigration Act to the point that today most immigrants, 71% of all those coming to Canada, come from the new economic class, and only 29% come from the family class or from refugees or some of the other smaller subclasses.

This has been a diametrically changing operation, and Ontario should have known this and should have done something. I remember all those debates. It should have done something but chose not to, until today.

Am I going to say this bill is a bad bill? No. I'm going to say it's late, and I'm going to say it's still a pretty timid bill. It only goes a little bit in getting Ontario into the place that even Prince Edward Island has occupied for many years. It's getting Ontario up to almost the level of the other provinces.

Let's see what the bill itself does. The bill looks at selection programs and target levels, but both of these will be subject to federal approval. Because we missed the boat, the federal government has now strengthened its authority and is unwilling to give some of the authority up to Ontario at this time.

The staff told me they wished they had been able to act on this before. This is the statement they made to me, and they were brutally honest. Had we done something about this before, we could have had a bill like Quebec's, but now we require some level of federal approval, which they think may be reluctant to be forthcoming at this

time. We can look at the selection programs and the target levels, but we can only do so with the approval of the federal government. That's what is contained in the body of the bill.

The second thing is that we can do research and establish committees. Now, I'm not opposed to doing research or establishing committees, but I'm not sure that that is necessarily, at least in the short run, going to help new immigrants to this country. We love setting up committees in this province. This government is excellent at working committees, at setting up committee after committee to discuss things and think about things and make recommendations on things and generally delay things. This bill allows for that, too.

Then the bill allows for the establishment of registries for employers and recruiters. This is set up much after the Manitoba bill, which has been extant and in place for a number of years, and this is a good thing. However, this also requires federal negotiation to do. Manitoba had to go through the process that Ontario will have to go through, and no one can say for sure that establishment of those registries will be allowed or will be forthcoming.

It also goes on to say that it will monitor and detect immigration fraud. I don't know what role Ontario thinks it's going to play except, perhaps, to turn the information over to the federal government, because it is clear in law, when it comes to enforcement action in removing those who gain immigration by reason of fraud or misrepresentation, that it is only the federal standard that applies. The appeal process through the Immigration and Refugee Board is quite clear in law, and I don't know what Ontario could do, save and except to provide information to the enforcement bodies.

It talks about an internal review mechanism that will be available. I'm not sure exactly what that means, but the review mechanism will allow people who have been refused immigration or who are not part of the new class to seek a review of the decision of the Ontario government not to include them. I don't know how successful that will be. Certainly, it couldn't be much less successful than many potential immigrants find dealing through the federal court and the Federal Court of Appeal, having seen the numbers of such cases that are transferred yearly to that body and the number of successful appeals that flow from them. It is really quite limited.

It also goes on to talk about timelines for decision-making, especially around foreign credentials. This is something that was asked for by the Fairness Commissioner in her report.

Last but not least, it allows for a regulation-making authority to allow the minister, in his or her wisdom, in the future, to make regulations relevant to the act itself.

Madam Speaker, that's what's in the bill. I don't have any problems with any of those things contained in the body of the bill. But I have to state that we have missed the boat. There is no excuse that could possibly be made for us not acting in all those years since it became apparent to everyone who studied or knew immigration that the rules had changed, that the people who were

coming to Canada had changed and that Ontario should have a role, and we chose not to have it. We chose not to sign accords; we chose not to make a bill. But I am thankful, again, and I don't know how many times I need to say it—probably a lot, because I'm being a little critical—that something is finally being done today.

I am disappointed as well, though, in what is not in the bill but could have and should have been in the bill. Some of it would be problematic, because the federal government has narrowed the scope of what is available to the provinces through legislation and through, in fact, some court jurisprudence. However, we should have aimed and could still aim, if this ever gets to committee, to try to embrace some of those things that are allowed in Quebec law and that they have taken advantage of for 36 years. What is wrong with us doing things like—from the Quebec legislation—making a guarantee to set targets? Ontario, even at 40% of the immigration to Canada today—even at 40%—will still take in 100,000 immigrants a year. That's pretty large. That's maybe not the population of London, but probably close to the population of Niagara—100,000 people. That's how many people come here each and every year, even at 40%. We need a guarantee to set the targets here in this province of how many people we can take.

1650

Quebec sets the target of how many they can accommodate, how many they can train into the French language, how many credentials they can accept, how many people they can accommodate in the schools and in the hospitals and everything else. We need to have a guarantee too so that Ontario does a fair and just job to the people who choose this great province to live in. There may come a time in the not-too-distant future when our numbers will go up from 40% back to the historical period of 60% or so, which we enjoyed just some 20 years ago.

The second thing this bill does and that we ought not to do in the bill: This bill accepts the paramouncy of the federal legislation. Quebec does not share the paramouncy. Quebec says that they are equal partners, and the British North America Act allows for it. I think that if Ontario is to be serious about immigration, they need to come out strongly and say that we are equal partners—not that we are a junior partner, not that what the federal government says comes first and foremost, but that we are equal partners in choosing people for this wonderful province.

The next issue which is not contained within the body of the bill but which is adequately and brilliantly done both in the Quebec legislation and, to a lesser extent, in the Manitoba legislation is that they have legislation and monies around settlement. I remember, when I first joined the immigration department all those many years ago, on February 27, 1973—how's that for a good memory? When I appeared for my first day at Toronto International Airport—because it was called that in those days before it was known as Pearson international airport—I was introduced into the terminal. I was intro-

duced to some of the people who worked there. There were two sets of immigration officers. One was federal officers, like the one I was hired to be, but there were also Ontario Welcome House officers. They worked for the Ontario government. Their job at Pearson airport and at every airport in Canada and at every border station from the United States—there was an Ontario welcome officer at least 16 hours a day. From the first thing in the morning till around midnight, there would be an Ontario welcome officer there. Their job was to help new immigrants when they arrived. They were the first settlement officials. They were the ones who handed out the application for an OHIP card. They were the ones who, if a new immigrant didn't have a place to stay that night, arranged for a hotel. They were the ones who explained to the new immigrants and their families how people could go to school. They looked at the credentials and how they could get their credentials upgraded. They did wonderful, wonderful work for new immigrants.

Ontario Welcome House was just down the street. The central headquarters was on University Avenue near Dundas. It unfortunately has died over the years because of cost cutbacks. That's what Quebec does, to this very day. Why can't Ontario dream big, like it once dreamed back in the 1970s and into the early 1980s, and bring back a settlement program that truly works for new immigrants?

We also have the issue of highly trained professionals. Quebec does a wonderful job because they help to choose their own immigrants. They have a grid system. They choose people who they think have the best opportunity of integrating into the Quebec culture. Part of that is the ability or the willingness to learn French, but other things include the education that they have. When an immigrant chooses to come to Quebec, he or she is not only looked at by a federal visa officer in one of our posts abroad; they also have to see a Quebec visa officer, who in turn looks at the credentials and determines the applicability of that person. When they choose an immigrant, they do something magical and wonderful that Ontario can only dream of: They look at the qualifications and they say to that prospective immigrant, "You have a degree, but I have to tell you, in Quebec this degree will not be recognized unless you take these additional courses, unless you go online and study and make yourself available for an exam when you arrive, and this is what the exam will entail. This is the possibility of you getting a job in your field in the next two years, if you do these things." And to some of the people, "It is unlikely that your credentials will ever be recognized." That is a magical thing to say. It might be disappointing. It might be disappointing, but I will tell you, to a prospective immigrant who is a doctor or a lawyer or a nurse or a teacher or who has some profession of which they are very proud in their country and for which their country is very proud of them, it is far better and far more humane, in my view, to tell them that their credential will likely never be accepted, they'll likely never get a job in that field, and that they are probably better off to stay where they are.

I have said before, and I just pick a country out of—I don't know; let's pick Afghanistan: a doctor who is practising in Afghanistan and who comes and wants to move to Canada, and we say, "Okay, you're a doctor, come on to Canada," but there's no guarantee that his or her credentials will ever be accepted. It is far better, in my view, to leave that doctor doing the kind of work that is necessary to be done in Afghanistan than to bring them here to deliver pizza, and that's the reality. That's what Ontario has to get around, and that's why Ontario has to be in the same kind of ballgame as Quebec. There is nothing that would stop us from doing that, but it is not contained within the body of this bill.

There is nothing on the non-economic classes in this bill. Quebec's bill, and I read some of it out, allows for the reunification of families, and it allows for the settlement of refugees and displaced persons. These make up some 29% today of the immigrant class that come to Canada. It allows for that. Quebec is in the forefront of making sure that those immigrants who are non-economic immigrants are actually chosen and assisted and given—well, assisted—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Aid.

Mr. Michael Prue: "Aid" is a good word. I was going to say "succour," but I didn't know whether people would understand that word.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I do.

Mr. Michael Prue: You do; okay. But thank you for "aid." "Aid" is probably better than succour.

Anyway, that's what we need to do, and I don't see that we are doing that. If we do go down that route, you will find that people who come to Ontario are far more generous in their praise of this province than they have been. We all know, every single person in this room who has been here long enough knows, that when you have a person who has come to Canada recently with credentials that they feel are valuable, only to have those squashed, they feel some bitterness.

I can only think in my own community of some of the people from the Bangladeshi community who have come forward to see me with tears in their eyes. Many of them are trained professionals in accountancy and they cannot use that training, or trained professionals in the law and they cannot use those credentials. They cannot use them in spite of the fact that Bangladesh is a member of the Commonwealth, in spite of the fact that many of the education programs were developed in Britain, in spite of the fact that Pakistan—which was once part of the united country that is today broken in half; it was then East and West Pakistan, and today it's Pakistan and Bangladesh—has the exact same examinations. They cannot understand why Canada, and Ontario in particular, has not helped them to have their credentials made. Quebec does that.

Quebec also looks after sponsored families to help reunification. There is no real reason why it takes so long to reunite spouses as it does under the federal program. There is no real reason why it takes so long to have adoptions take place and bring children from foreign

lands who would be way better off in Canada than in an orphanage somewhere else. There is no good reason why Ontario should sit by while people languish for years. Particularly in the extended-family class, when you're looking at parents or parents with children, it sometimes takes seven to eight years. In Quebec, that is not the case. Quebec recognizes how it needs to deal with them, helps to choose them, and certainly the transition from whatever country they're coming from to Quebec is much, much shorter. Ontario could do that, too.

1700

The last thing that I'm disappointed in not here is that the networks for the not-for-profit sector have not really been included to any great extent.

Madam Speaker, I go on to talk about the declining share. I've already talked a little bit about that. We have a declining share of immigrants coming to Ontario. It has declined from 60% to 40%. It has declined in raw numbers from approximately 150,000 or 160,000 a year down to less than 100,000. That decline is continuing and needs to be redressed, and maybe this bill will help it. But at the same time, not only are we taking fewer immigrants in Ontario, but the need for those immigrants is expanding rapidly.

We have estimates of what Ontario is going to need in the next 10 years. Ontario is going to need 364,000 skilled immigrants if we are to maintain the lifestyle that we have today. That's anyone from carpenters to bricklayers to lathe operators to people who work in the skilled trades. We are going to need 364,000 people. That is not going to be met by the program that is outlined here, where we take 2,000 provincial nominees, and we're hoping this year to try to get 5,000. That's what we're hoping for. That is what's contained in here. That is not going to satisfy our need for skilled trades in the next 10 years.

There is also a probable decline in the labour force coming. We have talked many times in this House about the aging boomers, about how the boomers are going to leave their jobs and have to be replaced. In fact, we know that without immigration, the actual increase in the population in Ontario will halt and will likely go into decline. We also need to make sure that immigration is able to cover that off so that all of us, including boomers like me, will be able to retire knowing that somebody is able to pick up that slack and pay the bills.

The reality about economic immigration to Ontario in and of itself—not just immigration in total but economic immigration: In the year 2001, 64% of immigrants to Ontario were in the economic class. In 2011, the last year for which there are statistics, that is down to 52%, and there is every evidence that that is declining.

That's why a bill like this is important. It is important because we need to make sure that those people who are able to come here and get a job and pay the bills and help the province to prosper do not decline. The Canadian average for economic immigrants is 71%; Ontario's is 52%. Something has seriously gone wrong, and it's gone wrong because nothing was done on this issue until today.

I see the minister here now. I don't know whether he heard it, but I want to thank him for bringing forward the first bill that I know of in 13 years and the first one that my colleague Rosario Marchese remembers in 23 years.

The province had a document that I read, which is an important document, I think. It's called *A New Direction: Ontario's Immigration Strategy*. A copy was given to me by Minister Coteau last year. I had a chance to read it and to reflect on it over the last several months. That document says that Ontario should look at doubling the number of provincial nominees in the program from 2,000 in 2013 to 5,000 in 2014. I don't have any statistics but I still think that that is a modest proposal.

If you look at a province like Manitoba—Manitoba takes more than 5,000 provincial nominees and brings them to Manitoba. Manitoba has 9% of the population of Ontario. If one were to extrapolate that, Ontario should be asking to be bringing some 50,000 provincial nominees. That's what we should be asking. But to ask for 5,000—I admit, it's better than 2,000, but I still have to wonder why we are being so timid. This province has 13 million people. This province has 105 federal seats. This province should be able to roar and be heard in Ottawa, and I don't understand why we are not doing that.

The second thing *A New Direction* talks about is that the province needs to try to get the employment rates and income of new immigrants, within three years, brought into line with citizens who have lived here for longer periods or all of their lives. It is a sad reality that at one time, new Canadians, people who came to this province, usually made about 90% of the Ontario average within three years of arrival in Canada. That has declined; it is now much less. It's around 75%, according to the last statistic I read quite some time ago. The amount of money that they are earning has declined in respect to their Canadian colleagues. We need, and *A New Direction* understands that we need, to do much more in terms of our immigration program in order to maximize their earnings or bring them into line with those who were born here.

The next thing *A New Direction* talks about is maximizing the use and employment of temporary foreign workers and international students. I have some disagreement with this. I know that it's in the document and I know that the minister has prepared the document and is prepared to follow it, but I have never believed that you should bring people here on temporary visas to work or temporary visas to go to school with the expectation that they cannot stay.

This is what is done in many countries around the world. Particularly if you go to Europe in places like Switzerland or Germany, in the guest worker programs that they have, people come in and work, sometimes for a generation. The kids are born there, but they have no stake in the community and they're never allowed to have permanent residence. I don't believe that Ontario should go down that road. Perhaps the minister, at some point, can review whether we should be maximizing the use of temporary foreign workers.

I know that there is a program that allows some of them to apply to remain in Canada after, but certainly not all of them. We do not need a subclass in this province or in this country that do not have all of the rights and privileges that a permanent resident might have. The right to do everything except vote and to be a temporary foreign worker is always to be at the mercy of your employer. If you lose your permit to work, it's very difficult to go from employer to employer. You've all seen stories of maids, people who are employed domestically, losing one employer and being threatened with deportation. We don't need that kind of subclass, and I think that we need to be very wary, even though it's in *A New Direction*.

A New Direction also said that there needs to be more support for employers to recruit. I would agree with that, provided that it does not displace Canadian workers. We all saw the example in British Columbia where a new mine was going into operation and there was deemed to be no Canadian suitable for being a miner. I don't know whether everybody remembers that. This was in British Columbia. They recruited and brought in I don't know how many hundred workers from China on a temporary program. We saw the banks doing that and offloading all of the work from Toronto to India. I don't think that we should be doing this kind of stuff. We should be telling employers, "We will help you to recruit when there are no Canadians or permanent residents available to do this kind of work," and that's what should be reflected in *A New Direction*.

I note as well that the minister has set a program to make sure that 5% of those coming to Canada will be from the francophonie. I agree with that. I think it maybe should be higher. I know that Quebec sets a standard that all of them must speak French or be willing to learn French. They've set a pretty high standard.

1710

I don't have any difficulty that immigrants coming to this country should either speak English or French or be reasonably sure that they will be able to pick that language up. For the majority, that makes overwhelming sense, especially economic immigrants who are chosen for their skills and abilities. Perhaps the family class may be somewhat divorced from that if you're bringing aged parents and the like, but certainly, having 5% francophone does not seem to me to be sufficient in a province where I think some 10% or 15% of the people speak French as a first language.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's 4.7%.

Mr. Michael Prue: Pardon?

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's 4.7%.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's only 4.7%? Then maybe 5% is not so bad. I didn't realize it was that low. I certainly know that when I travel in northern Ontario or if I go to eastern Ontario, I experience a lot more than 4.7%. But if that's what it is, then perhaps 5% is not so bad.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Another 5% try.

Mr. Michael Prue: Another 5% try. All right.

A New Direction also says that we need to increase the employment rates in chosen fields, and I think this

only makes sense. If we are going to recruit economic immigrants, we need to recruit them with the hope or at least the probability that they will find work in their chosen field. There is nothing sadder when I go into a room full of new Canadians—and I know we've all experienced this—than to see the tears in their eyes when they cannot get the kind of work that they have trained for, that they believe in, that is their life's ambition, and they can't get that kind of work here in Canada. I have seen people despondent. I have seen some of them wanting to go home.

It says here that we need to increase the number that can get their licence in Canada for whatever it is, and I agree with that. The goal has to be to bring more economic immigrants.

But I have some questions. I have some questions, and I hope perhaps the minister, if he chooses to use the two minutes, might be able to answer them, or perhaps other members of the government party may answer this in the debate in subsequent days.

First of all, why did it take so long for us to get to this point? Why did it take so long when we knew what was happening here for 10 years or more, what was happening in terms of the turnaround of the type of immigrants who were coming from family class and from nominated relatives today to economic immigrants?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: We're waiting for Coteau.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay. I've heard we're waiting for Coteau. This minister is the newest minister in this portfolio. There has been a string of them over the last 10 years, and certainly there was a string of them in the Harris-Eves years before that. This is when most of this started to occur, and I wonder why it has taken so long, so I leave that question.

I have to ask a question as well: Why does the process take so long for upgrading of people's credentials? Why has the province not reached out to prospective new immigrants while they are still in their countries? The process of immigration, even for an economic immigrant, can take years. I know the process that has to be followed. There's the application, the payment of fees. Then you go into the interview. Then, from the interview, you go into medicals. From medicals you go into stage B and criminality checks, stage B looking at terrorists and things like that. Then oftentimes the medicals expire and you have to go back and do them again. The average length of time is about two years in most of the world, but it can stretch to seven or eight in some countries like India and China. When we know these are potential immigrants coming in a class that we appreciate or want, why do we not work with those individuals to upgrade their skills or to get their skills recognized before they come?

Last, but not least, why do we not leave realistic expectations? As I said before, it's much more fair to tell a person that they're not going to get a job in their field here and they're better off to stay where they are, where they are doing things that are respected, than to bring them here to do menial labour.

I would like to quote a study, which was the expert round table put on by this government in 2012. It can be found, for anybody who is interested, at <http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca>. It's page 36 of the report. It so succinctly sets it out that I would like to quote it: "Pre-arrival services should be enhanced to ensure that new immigrants arrive in Canada with complete, correct, and current information on the Canadian labour market and the settlement services that are available to them. It is especially important that immigrants get a more accurate depiction of how their credentials and work experience will stack up in the Canadian labour market and whether they will require additional training upon arrival." That's the advice the minister has received. That's the advice I would like to see extended. That is the kind of provision I would like to see put in this bill.

This bill is a timid bill. This bill is a first step, and I recognize that, but we have a lot of catching up to do in this province. We need to catch up not only to Quebec but also to Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, where the immigration has now shifted. More and more people are choosing to go there. If we are going to compete favourably with them, we need to be able to do the same kind of things that they do, have the same kind of laws and the same kind of privileges, and expend the same amount of monies in order to do it right.

Mr. Speaker, I may not use my whole hour. I know I can if I want. I'd just like to close with a couple of other thoughts about suggestions to the minister and, perhaps, to some of his cabinet colleagues of other things that we can do to help new arrivals in this country.

The first thing I'd like to talk about is, why is Ontario maybe not alone but one of the worst offenders in determining that a new person coming to this country has to wait three months for OHIP? Why is it that we insist upon this? I know that in this Legislature we once passed a bill in very, very short order exempting military personnel who had not been in Canada for more than a couple of years, or a year or so, from the three-month rule. The military personnel, of course, were coming back to Canada having defended this country and our interests abroad, some of whom had catastrophic injuries or suffered from fatigue or burnout during the war. I understand why we did it, why we passed it in very short order.

But what is to say that a new person coming to this country would not need the services of a doctor or a nurse or a hospital? People can come here sometimes and be involved in a car accident, a woman come here and have to give birth, or somebody could be the subject of spousal abuse. All of these things require that a new immigrant be treated fairly. We have made a commitment to them in terms of allowing them to come here with all the rights and privileges of a Canadian citizen, save and except that of being able to vote, but we sometimes deny them an opportunity to have hospitalization.

I know the government can argue, and has argued, that they can apply for and get insurance before they come

here, but that is very expensive, particularly for people who are coming here from the Third World. Much of our immigration comes from countries where the standard of living is not as high as our own and where wages are not as high as our own. It would seem to me to be only fair that, once you have made the decision to have someone come here as a permanent resident and they are a permanent resident, we ought not to impose upon them a three-month condition in which they cannot use our services.

I am particularly mindful of a case which was brought to my attention, maybe a year ago now, of a young girl who was born in Bangladesh of Canadian citizen parents. She was born there because, as is the case in many foreign cultures, the prospective mother went home to be with her mother—quite normal, quite natural. She went home to be with her mother at the time of the birth, and when the child was born, the child was born with some complications. It took several months before the doctors in Bangladesh were able to stabilize the child so that the child could get on a plane and come back to Canada.

1720

Her parents were both eligible for OHIP because they had not been gone that long and they had paid into it, but the new child, who was a Canadian citizen, registered by birth abroad, came to this country, and although she needed immediate medical attention, the government refused to give it to her.

I am extremely thankful to this day—and I want to state this on the record to the current Minister of Health: I went to her, rather than making it a political issue at the time, and we both worked very hard to convince the Hospital for Sick Children to provide some of the services free of charge until the child was actually here 90 days. She had to wait 90 days; we had to stabilize that child for 90 days, through the largesse of the Hospital for Sick Children, in order for that child, who was a Canadian citizen, to get medical attention.

I think the government needs to look at this rule. It did not seem to me to be fair. It was not fair to that child and it is certainly not fair to the broad range of immigrants who have been chosen by Canada and who simply are told to wait for 90 days. Lots of things can happen in 90 days.

I think the government needs to, as well, make statements to the federal government about the newest changes, or anticipated changes, to the Citizenship Act. Currently, people have to live in Canada for three out of the last four years as permanent residents in order to apply for citizenship and to be afforded that status. The government of Canada is now upping that: You have to be here four years out of the last six. What that means is that many people will be here six, seven or eight years before they actually get their citizenship, and it seems to me unfair for people who have come to expect Canada as a land of opportunity and a place that welcomed them, and to suddenly put the brakes on and say, "No, that's not good enough anymore"—as an equal partner under section 95 of the British North America Act, we should be making a statement about that, and I hope the minister will accommodate it.

We also have in this country a two-tiered system, and I've spoken briefly about that. A two-tiered system is where you choose new immigrants, the bulk of whom are chosen at a visa office abroad—they come here and are accorded permanent residence on their arrival at the airport or across the border in a place like Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Windsor or any number of places. That's the majority, but we also have many people who come to this country as workers or students who are allowed to apply within the country and then become permanent residents. That two-tiered system is fraught with difficulties. I would hope that the minister will address this in subsequent statements he's making around this bill and, perhaps, other bills in order that we wean ourselves away from that. I have nothing against taking people who have studied or worked in this country, because their probability of success is probably pretty high. But at the same time, I don't like the fact that so many of them feel almost indentured at the time of application.

Mr. Speaker, I've got about five minutes left and I'm not going to use the whole time, you'll be happy to hear, but I do want to close with the words "I thank Minister Coteau again for, at last, bringing forth a bill." I'm hoping that when this bill goes to committee, we can all look at it with very, very hard positions that we need to improve this bill. It's not good enough, in my mind, that this province is catching up to Prince Edward Island. It is not good enough, in my mind, nor should it be in any of our minds, that we are going to have an immigration system that is akin to the other provinces in this country, save and except Quebec. We should be pushing for an immigration system in Ontario which most closely approximates that of the province of Quebec. It is in that province where new people who come to this country are fully dealt with in a fair and compassionate way; where they are chosen on the basis of their skills and abilities; where they are given aid in order to have their credentials recognized; where they are given help in learning French and/or—not so much English, but the official language of the province of Quebec; where they are treated in a way which I think we could only hope to. We need to emulate the province of Quebec, in not only getting economic immigrants who are going to benefit the province of Ontario, but also in helping to choose those refugees, displaced people and those people who come under the family class provisions. We have a right—and an obligation—to protect all of those people who would make this wonderful province and this wonderful country their home. We need to look at all aspects of the immigration program, and that includes reuniting families, keeping people from persecution and making sure that people are fully recognized for the talents, the skills and the abilities they bring with them to share.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much to the member for Beaches–East York. I now invite questions and comments to the member on his presentation.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Thanks to, first of all, our Minister Coteau for Bill 161 with regard to revamping some of the Ontario immigration provisions. I thank our col-

league from Beaches—East York for his always measured remarks.

I have to say, if I were just to speak quickly in relief of what's actually going on, the federal government is a government that believes that Canada is essentially the western half of this great land, that Alberta, British Columbia, others should be supported, that we should send all the economic immigrants over there. I'll give you a very pointed example. They have removed the physicians from the immigration board who spoke Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Farsi, Arabic and Tamil because they sent the signal that neither are those individuals particularly wanted or needed, nor are their families, nor are their spouses. I have folks coming over to my constituency office who have been married in various of these lands who are now telling me that it's taking 25, 26, 28 months for family reunification. Is this a coincidence or is it more deliberate?

Speaker, I would have to, with your indulgence, say that what is going on right now is a social engineering experiment; I would say a recalibration of the country. Why? If you increase the populations of places like Alberta, British Columbia, lo and behold, the number of seats that those places demand will increase, and therefore that may tilt the balance from a "formerly natural governing party" to another natural governing party. I think if you look at it closely, you'll appreciate that that is what is going on. Just today, as they call it, Chinese millionaires who are holding meetings in Beijing, folks who are willing to bring \$1.6 million to Canada and lend it "interest-free"—\$800,000—have been denied.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to introduce my comments on Bill 161. I find it very interesting, because I recall that when I was in optometry school there were optometrists, foreign-trained in other countries, who wanted to come to Canada, and it wasn't easy. It was up to the optometry profession to add a special program so that they didn't have to start right from the beginning to redo the entire qualifications. But they did have to certify. I find it interesting that while we're talking about making it easier for immigrants to come to Ontario and to find jobs in their skilled profession or field or something that they're passionate about, we're making it more difficult for a lot of skilled workers with the college of apprentices. It's sort of counter, in my opinion, to this exact proposal, because if we're making it more difficult for skilled workers to be qualified by forcing them to pay to the college of apprentices, by forcing them to qualify in a field where normally they wouldn't even have to register themselves as a trade, I think that's counterproductive to helping new immigrants find jobs. It's just one more, I guess, roll of red tape, tying them up in knots and making it difficult.

1730

I think that what a lot of us forget as residents of Ontario, especially those of us who were born in Canada, is how daunting it is to be a new immigrant, not just in

terms of learning your way around—we all know that even when we visit a new city, it's hard for us to find our way around—how hard it is for immigrants to move to a new country, learn their way around the culture and find the skills they need to be qualified in their profession. I think we have to address every aspect for new immigrants.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to congratulate the member for Beaches—East York on his eloquent comments. I think he really took us on a journey that positioned this legislation within the country, within the context in which it's being brought forward.

I really appreciated the history lesson that he brought to us around the BNA Act, that the only two jurisdictions that are shared between the province and the feds are agriculture and immigration. It has taken this point in our history as a province to actually bring forward immigration legislation that sets out a formal role for Ontario in the immigration jurisdiction.

There were a couple of comments that the member made that particularly resonated for me as the member for London West, because of stories that I have heard in my constituency office.

When he reflected on the young girl from Bangladesh who was a Canadian citizen by birth but had to wait 90 days in order to access health care, I was reminded of a very tragic story in my riding of a pregnant immigrant woman who had arrived in London, gave birth and was unable to access health care for the new baby, and the new baby died. This was an incredibly distressing story for my staff and myself about the lack of ability of our health care system to respond to the needs of everyone within our community. So I thank the member again for his comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: It is a pleasure to stand up and talk about this bill again in second reading. I want to address some of the comments that were made.

We heard from the member from Beaches—East York about how Ontario's taken so long to get to this point. I have to say that we are the first jurisdiction outside of Quebec in this country—so the first, before PEI, before anywhere in the west—

Interjection.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Outside of Quebec—to actually put forward legislation. Really, the intent here is to chart our own course, to say that Ontario cannot rely on the federal government when it comes to immigration and setting those numbers and that we need a bigger role to play.

There were some comments around newcomers and foreign-trained professionals. We have the best programs for foreign-trained professionals in this entire country. Our bridge training programs—we've invested, since 2003, over \$240 million in our programs and over 50,000 foreign-trained professionals have successfully got their

licence and found employment in this province. This is astonishing. This is incredible. In fact, like I said in my opening remarks last week, we are the envy of other provinces. We are doing something incredible here in the province of Ontario.

We heard a comment from my critic from the Progressive Conservatives who said that we're not the number one choice. I need to say this one more time, that Ontario is the number one choice for newcomers here in this country. In fact, like I said originally last week, if you take all the numbers west of this province, we still have more people coming to Ontario. Can we do better? Yes. We are going to do better. This is exactly why we need this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I now go back to the member from Beaches–East York for his reply.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you to my colleagues from Etobicoke North, Thornhill, London West and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration for their comments.

To my colleague from Etobicoke North, I'm not sure whether he was talking about anything I said. I hope not. I think he was attacking Conservative federal policy when he was speaking. I just want that to be clear for the record, because I don't remember saying any of those kinds of things or advocating any of those kinds of actions.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay.

To the member from Thornhill, thank you very much for your comments, and it was good to hear about the optometrists. I do acknowledge that the optometrists have tried to do a pretty good job in getting people accredited.

My colleague from London West, thank you for your kind words.

And for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I am not trying to say that Ontario is not in the game. I am just saying that it took far too long for us to get to where we are here today. This bill is a good bill. I anticipate that most members, if not all members, of the New Democratic Party will support it when it comes to second reading, but we will support it understanding that when this goes to committee, there are certain things that need to be strengthened. It needs to be strengthened in order that the people who are coming to this province can get the very highest level of service that we are capable of providing.

We know that the province of Quebec provides the best service. We also know that other provinces have beaten Ontario to the signing of accords. They may not have the legislation of which you speak, but they have signed accords, if not all members of us, which have allowed them to bring economic-class immigrants in much greater numbers than we have done in the past. The province of Manitoba, right next door, is one of the key examples that takes 5,000 or so economic-class immigrants and have done so for a number of years, and we're only just getting to that point now. That's the point I was trying to make.

I'm thankful for your legislation. Please, I only wish we could have done it earlier and better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm tremendously pleased to rise and speak in support of Bill 161. It really is a historic moment, because this is the first time in the history of Ontario that we're having legislation on immigration. So, Minister Coteau, well done, and thank you very much for your leadership.

I want to first start off by saying that this legislation is a beginning, not an end—just the beginning—and I want to directly start off by addressing the concerns that the member from Beaches–East York raised. I think his main concern is—and I can see the logic—why is the provincial nominee program at 5,000 people and not more? The answer is quite simple: The reason we're asking for 5,000 is not because that's all we want. That's all we're allowed to ask because, despite years and years—I can tell you—of lobbying by this government with the federal government to give Ontario its due recognition, recognize our place in the economic output, as well as by population, and to increase the number of people in the provincial nominee program, we have been stalled and stalled. We were at 1,000 two years ago, we are at 2,500 now, and we're asking for 5,000.

I agree with the member from Beaches–East York. If I had a say, and I know if the minister had a say, we would be asking for 50,000, but the federal government will not allow us, so that is the real nub. My request is, if he could speak to Mr. Mulcair and see if he can do a little bit of pushing for us on our behalf, because the official opposition in Ottawa now, as we are constantly reminded, is the NDP. So, really, I ask the MPP for Beaches–East York to perhaps take the next logical step and lobby with his federal counterparts for a fairer shake for Ontario when it comes to the provincial nominee program.

I just want to say that the actual centrepiece of this legislation is about giving Ontario a greater say in the kinds of immigrants and the skills that they bring to Ontario. That, in a nutshell, is the provincial nominee program, and I'm really pleased that we are going to double this, no question. I wish we could have had more, but that's up to the federal government.

1740

The timing of this legislation is very judicious. Ontario is at a critical time. We all know that our population is aging and our birth rate is falling, so immigration is a critical component of our economic growth, not to mention the social and cultural fabric of this province. So it's well timed and it has come just when we need it.

I just wanted to speak to the point that Ontario continues to do very, very well in terms of the immigrant population and their contributions to this province. Let me give you one example. For instance, Ontario is the number-three-ranked jurisdiction in North America when it comes to foreign direct investment. If you do that by per capita, Ontario becomes the number one jurisdiction to attract foreign direct investment. There's no question

that it has a lot to do with the fact that we have a strong economic base, the fact that this government has done so much to make the regulatory framework as well as the economic framework attractive to industry. But there is another reason why we tend to attract so much foreign direct investment, and that is, quite frankly, the fact that this province is made up of people from all over the world. They have these contacts with the rest of the world, and that certainly is a big part of our success story when it comes to foreign direct investment.

I do want to emphasize something else. While this legislation is indeed about the economic growth of this province, it's not just about the economy. It's also about the social and cultural importance of immigrants to this province.

I want to share a story that I read a while ago. Sometime in the year 1804 or 1805, the first church was built in what would later become Mississauga. It's an Anglican church, St. John the Baptist. Sometime in 1804, they started construction on a chapel. Then 1812 came along, the War of 1812, and everybody had to go fight the war, so construction on the chapel stopped. Once they came back from the war, finally, almost six or seven years in the making, this chapel was ready. Well, lo and behold, once the chapel was ready, guess what? The three Protestant faith groups in the settlement of Cooksville got into a dispute as to who would use the church. Think about it: They were all from the same faith and spoke the same language, but they still had a dispute. The three Protestant faiths in that small little village had a dispute as to who would now get to use this church. The whole point is, they found a solution and they figured out how they were going to share the church on different days.

But what the story illustrates to me is that forever Ontario has been about accommodation, that forever Ontario has been about diversity, however you define it, because back then, for those three Protestant groups, they were diverse people. They were very different, because diversity is always relative to who else is around you. To me that's a very inspiring story. It's a beautiful story that really is about human nature, that we are always ready to find our differences, no matter how similar we are, but we are also always able, if we will it, to find accommodation.

Multiculturalism isn't something new. It's something that was there back in 1804 in Mississauga and it's still there today. I think it speaks to a beautiful, beautiful story about the immigrant experience here in Ontario and in Canada. It really is something very valuable because there are very few countries outside of North America that can speak to this valuable heritage that we have. It's a story that inspires me and gives me much faith that the future of this province, no matter how diverse we become—I'm not afraid of diversity, just as 200 years ago, those good folks, those three Protestant groups, felt they were very diverse but found a way to live with each other.

This speaks to how important immigration has been to the province, not just from an economic point of view,

although it has always been the primary driver, I suspect, but also the multicultural DNA that it has put in each of us. That is what this bill celebrates.

Minister Coteau once said to me that legislation really follows when something becomes important to people. When something becomes very important, that's when we start to think about legislating in that area. So it's about time we started to legislate around immigration here in Ontario. I'm delighted that we have done this. This is a great start, like I said. It's the beginning, not an end. I look forward to working with all of you, and I hope you will support this. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, it's a pleasure to stand and talk to this particular bill, Bill 161, the Ontario Immigration Act. It's an interesting bill. Having listened to various members within our Legislature speak about this bill—one always learns, and one always needs to be willing to learn more. As a caucus, we will, in fact, be supporting this bill, but there may be some additional amendments forthcoming just to strengthen the bill. It's a good bill already, but we want to make it stronger as well.

I had mentioned earlier in the day how my particular riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex is a very diverse area as well. We've had people from all over the world move into our area. They've moved into the area because of jobs, because there was hope. There was opportunity. Many of them left everything that they owned back in their homelands to come to Canada, to settle in Ontario and, more specifically, within the Chatham-Kent-Essex area. I know that that holds true for all the other areas throughout this great province of ours.

The concern that I have is that, unfortunately, a lot of these immigrants coming in right now are frustrated because where they thought there was going to be opportunity for jobs, they're finding that there just aren't the jobs that they thought there would be. Of course, as you know, Speaker, we have a plan that we wanted to work with the Liberals and work with the NDP on to, in fact, strengthen by working together. We could strengthen this province. We had a plan. It was our million jobs plan. Unfortunately, last week, this particular Legislature shut us out. They shut it down. They weren't interested in hearing what we had to say, to give us a chance to try. But again, thank you very much for the time, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I wanted to kind of roll back a little bit of the debate to when I listened to the member from Beaches-East York, because I found his comments quite factual, quite informative. One piece that really caught my attention was the Quebec preparation, the system that they have in place to prepare new immigrants coming into their province so that they set them up for success. One of the things they do is, they have the grid system that he mentioned. They look at the person coming in, and they try to match their skill set to

education; preparation for housing, perhaps; hospitalization—all those services mean so much when someone comes into this country and in order to set them up to stay and to contribute productively. So I just wanted to say that I really enjoyed his comments on debate.

We have a lot of stories. I know, sharing stories at my constituency office—we have what's called the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre. A lot of new Canadians go to that agency in order to find assistance. One of the things that they go for, of course, is identification. Oftentimes, what's happened is that they can't get ID in order to get a driver's licence. So that's one barrier I find that maybe we need to address, because many people who come to Ontario—driving, generally, to get to your job is usually a necessity, or even getting to appointments and doing your personal errands. It would be really something I'd like to maybe bring to attention with regard to preparation when people are coming from different countries. Not everyone can do this if they're leaving in a situation of crisis, but bringing documents with them so they can prepare in order to get documentation to further themselves in Ontario—for example, the driver's licence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand and talk about Bill 161 and to thank my colleague the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for her comments. I want to underscore a point that she made. This is a very important bill for our future economic growth. It's going to give us the tools that we need to attract the kind of skilled immigrants to our province that we need to grow our economy.

1750

I was interested to hear, last week, the Leader of the Opposition talking about labour shortages in the province and the dichotomy of having labour shortages. This is what this bill will actually address. It will attract the kind of people that we need to fill those skilled jobs that we can't fill right now.

As well, we can all agree that this province was really built on immigration, on waves of immigration. My riding of Ottawa South is very much that way. If you look at it right now, I think there are 140 nationalities and some 52 languages. There are some schools where you have 50 or 60 different countries represented. It's really quite an amazing thing, different from when I grew up.

So I commend the minister on this bill. I'm really pleased to hear from the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex that he thinks the bill is a good bill—that's very, very encouraging—and the comments from the members across the way as well, so I'm very pleased to—

Mr. Todd Smith: One in three years.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, we're like that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: One thing I haven't heard—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Face the Speaker.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Oh, thank you.

One thing that I haven't heard is talk about language barriers. As the member for Thornhill, I can tell you that the recent campaign showed me how many new immigrants are struggling with English, and it's something that we have to address in order to welcome our immigrants and help them in their job plans. It's very limiting and it's very hard for them to find fulfilling jobs if they're not able to grasp good English skills.

I don't think I have to bring to anybody's attention how disappointed I was in our Minister of Culture, who also represents a very diverse community near mine. As somebody who, himself, came to Canada and obviously has—

Hon. Michael Coteau: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Michael Coteau: To remind the member, we're talking about the bill here, Bill 161, and I think that we should stay on topic.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I think that the member for Thornhill was referring to the speech that was just given by the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville. The member for Thornhill has the floor.

Mrs. Gila Martow: As I'm saying, there are a lot of newcomers who struggle with English in diverse ridings such as my riding, and the Minister of Culture, who I just mentioned, also has a diverse riding. We have to do more to address language barriers, and I think that it needs to be part of any discussion on immigration and helping people find fulfilling jobs. We all know that expecting immigrants to come and just do jobs that we are dictating to them doesn't work in the long run. They have to be able, with our help, to find jobs that they feel fulfilled in and they have the lifestyle. Otherwise, there's going to be resentment as to why they came here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Mississauga East–Cooksville has the floor to respond.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I just want to thank everybody who spoke and responded on this bill. I clearly want to thank the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex for saying that he's going to support this bill. Thank you very much. Now we know that the bill will hopefully get passed, and I'm hoping that you're speaking for the entire Tory caucus and not just for yourself.

All I want to say is, this is a good bill. Whether it goes far enough or not, the fact is that it's a good bill, so I certainly hope that all 107 members, now that we're a full House—106—will be able to vote on it and vote in support of the bill.

I did want to very quickly talk about the issue of the English language that has been brought up a few times. I do believe that as a government we ought to give as much support as we can to allow immigrants to learn the language, but I am troubled by the notion that one needs to be proficient in one of the two official languages to come here, because if that was the case, we wouldn't have the diversity that we have here today. When you think of all of the people who have, through the centur-

ies, come from countries where neither English nor French was made—our own grandparents. I'm sure, in this very Legislature, many of us can trace back to grandparents who probably did not speak a word of English when they came here.

I think that is something that I feel very strongly about: that we should provide them the ability to learn the language, certainly, but I'm not sure that that should be a prerequisite to come here, because our history of immigration shows that people are able to succeed after

coming here, even if they didn't speak the language. In today's world, everybody already knows a little bit of English, so they already have a jump-start.

Other than that, well done, Minister. I look forward to the passage of this historic bill. Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1755.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Haltoun Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉES PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Continued from back cover

Worktrends.ca	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	5648
Athlètes olympiques	
M. Phil McNeely	5648
Idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis	
Mr. Bill Walker	5649
Barbers	
Mr. Jonah Schein	5649
Early years centres	
Mr. Mike Colle	5649
Robotics competition	
Mr. Victor Fedeli	5650
Wills	
Ms. Dipika Damerla	5650
Travis Gerrits	
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	5650
Private members' public business	
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	5650

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Buy in Canada for Mass Transit Vehicles Act, 2014, Bill 168, Mr. Mauro / Loi de 2014 favorisant l'achat de véhicules de transport en commun au Canada, projet de loi 168, M. Mauro	
First reading agreed to	5651
Mr. Bill Mauro	5651
Saving Apprentices' Jobs Act, 2014, Bill 169, Mr. Dunlop / Loi de 2014 pour la sauvegarde des emplois pour apprentis, projet de loi 169, M. Dunlop	
First reading agreed to	5651
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	5651
Greater Protection for Interns and Vulnerable Workers Act, 2014, Bill 170, Mr. Schein / Loi de 2014 pour une protection accrue des stagiaires et des travailleurs vulnérables, projet de loi 170, M. Schein	
First reading agreed to	5651
Mr. Jonah Schein	5651
1360906 Ontario Limited Act, 2014, Bill Pr23, Mr. Kwinter	
First reading agreed to	5651
Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act, 2014, Bill 171, Mr. Sousa / Loi de 2014 de lutte contre la fraude et de réduction des taux d'assurance-automobile, projet de loi 171, M. Sousa	
First reading agreed to	5651

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Automobile insurance

Hon. Charles Sousa	5652
Mr. Victor Fedeli	5653
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5653

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Lyme disease

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette	5654
------------------------------	------

Regional centres for the developmentally disabled

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	5654
-------------------------------	------

Environmental protection

Mr. Joe Dickson	5655
-----------------------	------

Air quality

Mr. Todd Smith	5655
----------------------	------

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5655
------------------------------	------

Ontario College of Trades

Mr. Monte McNaughton	5656
----------------------------	------

LCBO outlet

Mr. Joe Dickson	5656
-----------------------	------

Air quality

Ms. Sylvia Jones	5656
------------------------	------

Ontario College of Trades

Mr. Jim McDonell	5656
------------------------	------

Cystic fibrosis

Mr. Jim Wilson	5656
----------------------	------

LCBO outlet

Ms. Laurie Scott	5657
------------------------	------

Ontario College of Trades

Mr. Todd Smith	5657
----------------------	------

Ontario Disability Support Program

Mr. Victor Fedeli	5657
-------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Ontario Immigration Act, 2014, Bill 161, Mr. Coteau / Loi de 2014 sur l'immigration en Ontario, projet de loi 161, M. Coteau	
Mr. Todd Smith	5657
Ms. Peggy Sattler	5660
Ms. Soo Wong	5661
Mr. Rick Nicholls	5661
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	5661
Mr. Todd Smith	5661
Mr. Michael Prue	5662
Mr. Shafiq Qadri	5669

Mrs. Gila Martow	5670
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	5670
Hon. Michael Coteau.....	5670
Mr. Michael Prue.....	5671
Ms. Dipika Damerla	5671
Mr. Rick Nicholls	5672
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	5672
Mr. John Fraser.....	5673
Mrs. Gila Martow	5673
Ms. Dipika Damerla	5673
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	5674

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 4 March 2014 / Mardi 4 mars 2014

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Child Care Modernization Act, 2014, Bill 143, Mrs. Sandals / Loi de 2014 sur la modernisation des services de garde d'enfants, projet de loi 143, Mme Sandals	
Mr. Rob Leone	5627
Ms. Catherine Fife	5630
Hon. Liz Sandals	5631
Mr. John Yakabuski	5631
Mr. Jonah Schein	5631
Mr. Rob Leone	5632
Mr. Peter Tabuns	5632
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5637

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Rod Jackson	5637
Hon. Michael Chan	5637
Mr. Rick Nicholls	5637
Mr. Toby Barrett	5637
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5637
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	5637
Ms. Soo Wong	5637
Hon. Glen R. Murray	5637
Mme France Gélinas	5637
Mr. Taras Natyshak	5637
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	5637

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Energy policies	
Mr. Tim Hudak	5637
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5638
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5638
Energy policies	
Mr. Tim Hudak	5639
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5639
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5639
Hydro charges	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	5640
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5640
Hydro charges	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	5640
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5640

Renewable energy

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5641
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5641

Automobile insurance

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5642
Hon. Charles Sousa	5642

Education funding

Ms. Helena Jaczek	5643
Hon. Liz Sandals	5643

Health care

Mrs. Christine Elliott	5643
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5643

Pan Am Games

Mr. Paul Miller	5644
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5644

Rural economic development

Mr. Bill Mauro	5644
Hon. Jeff Leal	5644

Pan Am Games

Mr. Rod Jackson	5645
Hon. Michael Chan	5645

Child care centres

Miss Monique Taylor	5646
Hon. Liz Sandals	5646

Waste disposal

Mr. Grant Crack	5646
Hon. David Oraziotti	5646

School extracurricular activities

Mr. Rob Leone	5647
Hon. Liz Sandals	5647

Hospital funding

Ms. Peggy Sattler	5647
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5647
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	5647

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop	5648
---------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Ontario College of Trades

Mr. Rod Jackson	5648
-----------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

CA20N
X1
- D23

Government
Publication



No. 110

N° 110

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 5 March 2014

Mercredi 5 mars 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 5 March 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 5 mars 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMPLYING WITH INTERNATIONAL TRADE OBLIGATIONS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 DE CONFORMITÉ AUX OBLIGATIONS COMMERCIALES INTERNATIONALES

Mr. Chiarelli moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 153, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 with respect to a World Trade Organization decision /
Projet de loi 153, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité en ce qui concerne une décision de l'Organisation mondiale du commerce.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I rise today to begin second reading debate of the Complying with International Trade Obligations Act, 2014. I'll be splitting my time with my parliamentary assistant, the MPP for Mississauga—Streetsville.

The bill, if passed, makes modifications to the Electricity Act, 1998, that would enable Ontario to comply with the World Trade Organization ruling on domestic content provisions in the feed-in tariff or FIT renewable energy program.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to provide the context for today's debate, namely the rationale and benefits of our renewable energy policies and the role of our domestic content legislation.

When our government was elected in 2003, Ontario's electricity system was in a mess. There was a deficit. The government of the day was importing \$1 billion a year in expensive imported electricity. The previous government had lost generation capacity. They lost the equivalent of Niagara Falls running dry. They lost transmission capacity, and prices were skyrocketing as a result of the Tories' failed privatization efforts. It was a dirty, polluting system.

The Harris government, which included the present Conservative leader in cabinet, increased dirty, coal-burning generation by 25%. That's 25% of total capacity.

When our government took over in 2003, it took over a system that was unreliable, that was dirty, with skyrocketing costs.

So our government implemented three priority policies in the electricity system: number one, it must be reliable; number two, it must be clean; and number three, it must be affordable—all of equal priority, Mr. Speaker.

Starting in 2003, our government began investing in our system, a system that had been allowed to degrade and didn't meet the energy needs of Ontario. Since 2003, this government has invested \$31 billion in the electricity system, including \$21 billion for new generation and \$11 billion of upgraded transmission infrastructure, including the recently completed 500-kilovolt Bruce to Milton line.

We have moved from a deficit to a surplus of electricity. In 2013, our surplus of electricity generated \$300 million of revenue to reduce system costs, and this year, we have totally eliminated dirty coal, the largest greenhouse emissions reduction project in North America. Mr. Speaker, that's the equivalent of taking seven million cars off of our roads in Ontario. The health impacts of getting off dirty coal are: \$4.4 billion in avoided health care and environmental costs; 668 fewer premature deaths per year; 928 fewer hospital admissions per year; 1,100 fewer emergency room visits per year; 300,000 fewer minor illnesses, such as headaches, coughing and other respiratory symptoms, per year; and almost total elimination of smog days in cities like Toronto and Ottawa.

If I could use a couple of personal examples, for 10 years or so, for a number of years, I was helping to coach my daughter's hockey team. They were nine, 10, 11, 12 years old as they were going through the system. Every single year, there were four, five or six children playing hockey with puffers, suffering from asthma. When I was mayor, I used to visit grade 5 classes, because grade 5 classes do a unit on government, and there was always a question-and-answer afterwards. When I was Minister of Infrastructure a couple of years ago, I again went into a grade 5 class. After my dissertation, I had a 10- or 11-year-old girl stand up and ask a question on air pollution. I didn't answer the question; I asked another question, having gone through the experience many times. I asked, "Out of a class of 18, how many in this class suffer from asthma and use puffers?" It was seven out of 18, Mr. Speaker, and the teacher put up his hand as well. That's what we're talking about by investing in clean energy.

A major contributor in eliminating dirty coal generation in Ontario is our Green Energy Act and our Renewable Energy Feed-In Tariff Program—all clean and emissions-free. Our Green Energy Act renewable energy

program not only successfully turned a dirty, polluting electricity system into a clean system but, in the process, we created a vibrant, world-leading renewable energy industry right here in Ontario. It created over 31,000 jobs, including manufacturing facilities in Guelph with Canadian Solar, in Toronto with Celestica, in Tillsonburg with Siemens and Samsung and now in London with Siemens and Samsung. It is expected that by the end of 2014, we will have added over 6,000 megawatts of clean, renewable energy to the grid in most parts of the province.

When the Green Energy Act was enacted, there was a lively debate about the domestic content provisions. Everyone was aware that there would likely be a WTO challenge and that the provision would possibly or likely be ruled to be in contravention of world trade laws and therefore would likely be temporary. That is in fact what happened. That is why today's legislation is required. But, in the meantime, Ontario's growing renewable energy sector has had the benefit of domestic content rules and therefore has created over 31,000 jobs. And I might add that the 255 FIT contracts still in completion, still yet to be completed, continue to carry the benefits of domestic content rules into the next two or three years. So we are getting, out of that provision, six to seven years of domestic content provisions, which have enabled us to build a strong renewable energy industry right here in Ontario.

Our ministry has been engaged with many renewable energy stakeholders, and we collectively believe together we can continue to foster a healthy and growing renewable and clean energy industry here in Ontario. Manufacturers like Samsung, Siemens and Canadian Solar have promising export initiatives. They're already starting to export. We meet with them regularly. We visit their sites. They're excited about this industry; they're investing in it, and they're creating jobs.

I said at the beginning that we had three equal priorities: reliable energy, clean energy and affordable energy. We made significant investments: \$31 billion to make our system reliable and clean. These investments have put predictable pressure on prices for about four or five years. So we have taken major steps to help our system to be affordable. We have taken steps to mitigate our energy-electricity costs. Our government modernized an electricity system that needed to be fixed to ensure Ontarians had reliable and clean power, and we've accomplished that. We are taking action to reduce overall electricity system costs and ensure electricity bills remain affordable for families and businesses.

0910

Moving forward our 2013 long-term energy plan, as I've just indicated, we have necessarily, almost on an emergency basis, had to invest \$31 billion to make the system reliable and clean. Moving forward, we have taken close to \$20 billion out of our projected cost base. We renegotiated the Samsung renewable energy contract and removed \$3.7 billion out of the next 20 years, deferring the construction of two nuclear reactors at Darlington generating station. That avoids \$15 billion of

investment. I must say that the opposition wants to continue investing in energy we don't need, and they will make costs skyrocket.

We introduced dispatching rules for wind generators, saving over \$200 million to ratepayers plus \$65 million in savings to the Ontario Power Authority. That means that wind, when they're generating—if they're generating electricity that's not needed, they don't get paid for it. That's a tremendous improvement over how wind started into the system.

The leaders of both opposition parties have confirmed that they would not lower electricity rates, nor would they freeze them. In fact, the PC Party, as I mentioned, would spend \$15 billion on new nuclear plants that we don't need, which would cause prices to skyrocket.

Currently, Ontario's residential and industrial electricity rates are and will remain competitive with similar jurisdictions in North America. Ontario's residential rates are forecast to rise by 2.8% annually over the next 20 years.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition will mention a very significant increase in prices that's in our long-term energy plan, which we disclosed as part of the 20-year program. They will refer to those years, but they will never refer to the other years which show an average increase of 2.8% for residential customers over that period of time. According to the National Energy Board, that's less than in most other large Canadian provinces. The National Energy Board keeps these records of 20-year projected costs: Alberta, 3.7%; BC, 3.0%; Manitoba, 3.2%; Quebec, 3.0%—incidentally, Quebec just raised their rates by 5.8% about two months ago—Saskatchewan, 3.3%; and, I repeat, Ontario, 2.8%.

Our industrial rates in northern Ontario are among the lowest in Canada and lower than 44 US state jurisdictions. Industrial rates in southern Ontario are lower than in Alberta, Michigan, New Jersey and California and in line with states like New York, Virginia and Tennessee.

We have a number of significant programs, not including conservation measures, by which people can significantly reduce their rates. We have significant programs to help reduce the cost of electricity for families and small businesses—programs the opposition, in fact, voted for. The Ontario Clean Energy Benefit helps families, small businesses and farms manage electricity prices by taking 10% off hydro bills.

Mr. Speaker, the next couple of items you will almost never hear, or rarely hear, the opposition members mention, even to their constituents, even though it's for the benefit of their constituents, because they voted against these provisions. That's the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit. It saves qualifying individuals up to \$963 per year off their energy bill, with a maximum of \$1,097 per year for qualifying seniors. I would like to see how many times the members of the opposition have reminded their constituents of those provisions, which they voted against.

We also have a number of programs to help reduce costs of electricity for industrial and commercial consum-

ers. As of 2013, the Industrial Electricity Incentive Program makes eligible companies qualify for electricity rates among the lowest in North America in exchange for creating new jobs and bringing new investment in the province. That saves up to 50%.

I'm going to look directly at the member from Renfrew-Pembroke, because I was at an event about three or four days ago, and there was a delegation there from the economic development arm of Renfrew-Pembroke. Mr. Speaker, they almost jumped over the table and gave me a hug. The reason why is that, several months ago, a saw-mill paperboard maker applied under the IEI Program, and they were accepted into the program. They are going to reopen those facilities which have been closed for a couple of years. That's the benefit of the IEI Program.

The member from Barrie reminded me—I'm inviting you to the official announcement. I hope you will come, and I hope you will give us credit for starting those new businesses with our reduced industrial electricity prices.

The Industrial Conservation Initiative helps large consumers save on costs by incenting them to shift their energy consumption to off-peak hours. That will save up to 20%. Of course, as I mentioned, the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program reduces electricity prices for large northern industrial consumers by 25%.

Renewable energy is a very significant part of our electricity system. We now have 255 unfinished contracts. These are legal contracts that have been signed, awarding electricity proponents the right to create renewable energy in their designated sites.

The Leader of the Opposition has taken so much pride in introducing the Million Jobs Act. Embedded in that Million Jobs Act, Mr. Speaker—

Applause.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: What they're applauding is a provision in that act that would allow the Minister of Energy to cancel contracts which have already been awarded. That's 255 contracts that have a \$20-billion revenue stream associated with them. I just want to indicate the opinion that we have from third-party professionals. FIT contracts allow for termination only in cases where project developers do not meet their contractual obligations, and the OPA would be subject to legal action if it terminated FIT contracts for projects which have met their obligations. If they had the intention, by putting that in, to put a chill in the electricity sector in Ontario, they have been very, very successful, because there are now 255 companies who have invested significant funds in their contracts who are sitting there saying, "This is Russian roulette. Maybe I'm going to be the one that's going to get axed." You know what, Mr. Speaker? I'm sure that they have heard from the stakeholders as well.

I'll wrap up with those comments; I want to leave enough time for my colleague. Our domestic content measures for renewable energy have served our province well, and our renewable energy program, as laid out in the long-term energy plan, is extremely viable, with a strong future ahead of us, beneficial, creating jobs that they want to kill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's my pleasure to pick up where the Minister of Energy left off and to talk about the fact that one of the province's objectives in establishing the feed-in tariff program, which is the cornerstone of Ontario's Green Energy and Green Economy Act, passed in 2009, was to kick-start the development of a new clean energy manufacturing and service sector, something at which it has been very successful.

The Green Energy and Green Economy Act was created to expand Ontario's production of renewable energy, encourage energy conservation and promote the creation of clean energy green jobs. The goal of the act was to expand Ontario's renewable energy production and to create clean energy jobs in a number of ways: by creating a feed-in tariff program that establishes fixed rates for energy generated from renewable sources, such as solar photovoltaic, biogas, biomass, landfill gas, wind and solar power, and to establish minimum levels of Ontario labour and materials required to qualify for the program; by establishing a streamlined approvals process for small-scale renewable energy projects that meet regulatory requirements; by implementing a smart power grid to support the development of new renewable energy projects and to prepare Ontario for new technologies such as electric cars.

0920

Four years later, Ontario's energy sector is one of the economic engines that are driving our provincial economy, one of those engines that lifted us out of the global recession early and have made us the best-performing jurisdiction anywhere in North America.

Ontario's clean energy initiatives have attracted billions of dollars in new private sector investment, and they've contributed to the creation of more than 31,000 clean energy jobs across the province: knowledge-intensive, high-value jobs—more than 31,000 of them.

Today, Ontario boasts a strong renewable energy sector, with more than 30 manufacturing facilities currently producing materials for local wind and solar projects. Consider manufacturing facilities like Canadian Solar in Guelph. They're among the top five module producers globally. The company employs as many as 400 people, with a 220-megawatt module production capacity in Ontario. The whole world would like to have a plant like that. This assembly line is being used in solar photovoltaic projects around the world, including here in Ontario, with more than 30 megawatts installed.

Another example is Celestica, an international R&D and solar manufacturing firm that has its global headquarters right here in Toronto. Celestica has more than one million square feet of space and employs some 1,600 people in Ontario, 500 of whom perform cutting-edge research into renewable energy products to find, for example, innovative ways to produce more efficient solar panels and inverters. An inverter is a device that takes DC power and converts it to AC power, commonly used on the grid.

Speaker, it is the technical and management acumen of companies like these that brings the promise of renewable energy from the lab through financing to deployment and employment right here in Ontario. This has been good for Ontario.

Ontario's wind and solar manufacturing facilities are suppliers to global markets. Indeed, on my first trip to India, one of the things that the first minister of the state of Gujarat, Mr. Narendra Modi, told me point-blank—he said, “You people are recognized, in Ontario, as world leaders in solar and in wind production.” He said, “Get your companies over here. Just get them over here.”

Ontario will continue to expand the role of renewable energy in our supply mix as its cost comes down and the industry's capabilities go up. Don't forget, we've been in the renewable energy business a long time in Ontario, with hydroelectric power being the principal source of clean, green and renewable energy.

By 2025, some 20,000 megawatts of wind, solar, bioenergy and hydroelectric generating capacity will be online, representing about half of Ontario's installed generation capacity.

We have confidence in the resilience of the clean energy manufacturing sector in Ontario and that our clean energy investments will continue to be not merely a source of jobs for Ontario, not merely a source of careers for the young people in our colleges and universities, but a source of pride for all of our people, knowing that in North America, uniquely, we are now off dirty coal.

This province has more than 4,000 megawatts of wind and solar capacity currently under development, which will largely use locally manufactured equipment. Last year, Ontario committed to making 900 megawatts of new capacity available between 2013 and 2018 through the feed-in tariff and microFIT programs for projects up to 500 kilowatts. These projects are expected to create more than 6,000 jobs while producing enough electricity each and every year for more than 125,000 homes.

This new capacity will help Ontario maintain its position as a leading jurisdiction for renewables, maintain important clean energy jobs, and continue to introduce clean energy sources in the supply mix. Starting in 2014, this year, the feed-in tariff program would have an annual procurement target of 150 megawatts, with a 50-megawatt annual target for microFIT projects. This is one industry that, in the 21st century, has developed from a standing start in the province of Ontario, is a source of pride for our people, for our province and for our businesses, and it's one of the reasons that Ontario remains a winner in the North American business community.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to join the debate. I want to respond a little bit to the Minister of Energy's speech here earlier. He's very good at telling half the story. He talks about the money that Ontario is saving in the changes they've made to their long-term energy plan resulting from the fiasco that is the Green Energy Act. Speaker, their renewable energy plan will go down as

one of the most egregious economic disasters in Ontario's history. He talks about saving \$20 billion from where it would have been. That should give you some idea of how bad a deal they were prepared to make in the first place, with people like Samsung—large, multinational, very, very rich corporations. He talks about choosing wind over nuclear. He talks about reliability. How can you classify any kind of generation that runs at less than 30% capacity as being reliable, when our nuclear fleet is among the most reliable in the world? Some of the Darlington units have run at 99% in the last couple of years. That's how reliable our nuclear fleet is. So you're going to trade that in for something that is less than 30% reliable, because we don't control the wind?

The money that has been invested—I shouldn't say invested, but wasted—on the Green Energy Act—that is one of the reasons they have this IEL Program, to give some cherry-picked companies a break on electricity, because they've got such an excess, because they allow all this excess energy into the grid, because they've overpaid for it and they've contractually agreed to take it into the grid. So when Ontario doesn't need the energy, it was giving it away to the United States, or Quebec, or even paying them to take it. Well, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that maybe it's a better idea to give it to some of the companies that can actually use it here to create jobs, and stop giving it away. It's not hard to figure out. But I want the Minister of Energy to tell the whole story the next time—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm really happy to be able to have the opportunity to stand up in this House and speak about hydro rates, and the cost that it has on what I know—small businesses in my riding, and how it's affecting them. The cost of global adjustments—I didn't hear anything in the minister's speech about global adjustments and what those costs are doing to our small businesses and our businesses in our ridings and to our economy. How many manufacturing jobs have we lost in this province because of the cost of hydro? I didn't hear any of that in the minister's speech. But he did talk about the fact that we on this side of the House didn't talk about lowering rates or freezing rates. Well, quite frankly, we New Democrats put forward a solution—a small solution it may be—to take HST off hydro for families, so that they could afford it just that little bit more.

But again, I'd love to hear more about the global adjustment. I would like to know his view on the global adjustment. I'll give you an example. For a small business in my riding, his electricity use is approximately \$1,000. By the time he has the global adjustment, all the delivery charges and everything else, his bill is over \$10,000. That's a huge increase. These are the kinds of things that we need to talk about. These are the kinds of things that are going to make a difference for people in all of our ridings across this province, and make sure that we have viable jobs in manufacturing to keep them here, because hydro rates are definitely a sure factor driving those jobs out of our province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to take a few minutes just to share a few thoughts with the members and the public that are watching. Having a viable, realistic and visionary plan for energy takes courage. A number of years ago, we set out with a long-term energy plan. The current minister has put together a long-term energy plan that levels with the people of Ontario and talks about the challenges of having a clean, reliable, modern energy system. It doesn't happen easily. It takes tough positions.

0930

If you want to have a clean energy system, if you want cleaner air—unlike the party opposite, who have done everything they can to put barriers in our way in getting to that place—then it does take investments. If you want a reliable system, you have to invest in infrastructure, unlike the party opposite when they were in power. They just put their heads in the sand and let our energy system go down the tubes. That's why we've had to make significant investments.

Our long-term energy plan ensures that we never go back to the Tory days, where we had to rely on dirty sources of energy, like coal, to provide power to our people and our businesses. We're not going to go back to the Tory days, where we completely ignore the need to invest in transmission.

This legislation before us here today that the minister has introduced is important. There are at least 31,000 jobs in the clean energy sector that would not exist today if this government had not had the courage and the wisdom to move forward and make the decisions needed to build a clean energy economy in this province.

The people on the other side talk about creating jobs. Their policies would kill jobs. Some 31,000 jobs today in this province in the clean energy sector would not exist if the Leader of the Opposition had his way, Mr. Speaker. It's something we can be proud of, something we are proud of, and I thank the minister for bringing this legislation forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's always a pleasure to stand here, but some mornings you just have to shake your head as to what actually is being said here. I hope the viewers back home are paying close attention to what this minister is saying about renewable—supposedly renewable, supposedly affordable—energy.

Let's get the facts straight, Mr. Speaker. What this government has done is they've actually been an invasive species themselves when it comes to dictating to municipalities throughout the province for these industrial wind turbines to be placed and located here, pitting neighbour against neighbour. Let's face it: The minister knows himself, if he reads the studies and is up on the file, that wind is only 18% reliable, so it's not reliable. If you look at the Auditor General's report on how much the Green Energy

Act cost this province last year, it's over \$1 billion. That's not affordable.

So, they talk about dirty coal. They talk about the bad old days of Mike Harris and the Tory government. Well, why there's not as much pollution per se is because we have lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in this province under this Liberal government in the last decade. They're proud to say, "We've lost 300,000 jobs, but we've created 31,000 jobs." That's what I refer to as Liberalnomics; it doesn't add up.

So I would say, in closing, that the Green Energy Act is not reliable, it's not affordable, and this Liberal government is not electable.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Response?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have to acknowledge the contributions of my colleagues from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Hamilton Mountain, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, and the member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

Speaker, one cannot miss the irony of listening to the Conservative Party say that they would throw out 50% of Ontario's generation capacity plan to be from renewable energy and listen to the NDP say they would throw out 50% of Ontario's generation capacity coming from the refurbishment of our world-class Candu nuclear reactors. Both parties taken together would take all of our generation capacity and just toss it. I'm not sure how they plan to generate electricity for the province of Ontario. I can say to people watching, however, that only this government has a balanced, decentralized, diversified plan to take power generation and do with power generation exactly what has happened with computing power in our lifetime: It went from large, centralized mainframes to many diversified, decentralized servers and routers. That's the way the electricity grid is going everywhere in the world.

We don't need to throw out half of our generation capacity that's designed to be renewable. We don't need to throw away half of our generation capacity which is designed to be our baseload nuclear generating capacity. Both parties will tell you about the electricity they won't generate, but only this government is going to tell you about how they're going to bring to Ontario a world-class, reliable, economic, dynamic electricity generation and transmission system. That, Speaker, is the job that Ontarians sent us here to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 153 on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus. This piece of legislation is actually very serious, with far-reaching implications if it is not done properly, which is probably my biggest criticism here today.

Speaker, I think what I'll do in my time is lay my speech out this way: what this legislation is and how it became; I'll talk about the problems in Ontario today with respect to our electricity system, our hydroelectric

system and the prices people are paying; and then I'd like to talk about some of the solutions that we in the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party believe we could bring forward when we are elected to govern this province.

As you're aware, Speaker, in 2009, when my colleague and seatmate was our energy critic before I, one of the largest, most omnibus pieces of legislation put forward in this assembly was the Green Energy Act. At the time, we took, I thought, a very principled stand, which has guided us in the last half of a decade in opposing this and understanding what the implications would be with respect to wind and solar power generation in Ontario, what that meant to our supply mix but, as importantly, what it would mean to the price of hydro and our electricity system here in the province of Ontario. At the time, Speaker, you will likely recall that we talked about the Green Energy and Green Economy Act costing Ontario residents who pay for their power about 50% more. That's now coming to fruition—not my numbers; it's their numbers.

The long-term energy plan put forward by the Liberals in the last year has said that they will increase our hydro bills by about 50%. People can't afford that anymore. We stood here and we said that. We know, for example, that we raised the issue of stripping locally based decision-making. We identified very early on that that would be a key and significant problem for municipalities across Ontario. Now we have over 70 municipalities in rural Ontario who have signed resolutions suggesting and stating that they are not willing hosts. They don't want wind and solar farms or turbine developments in their communities. They want a say. You can understand, at the time we're talking about, municipalities had the right to have their say on shopping centres in their community; they were able to have a say on whether a gas station was in their community. They were able to have a say on virtually any development in their community, with the sole exception of whether or not wind or solar power energy were going to be developed in their community. They were stripped away from that, and that has caused widespread anger and disdain in rural Ontario against this current government. We warned them; we said that would happen. We asked them to remove that clause in the existing act, but they chose not to do it. We said it would cost jobs.

Now, at the time—they'll talk about 31,000 jobs, which means probably 3,000 jobs—they promised in this assembly 50,000 jobs. You want to know what? I remember George Smitherman standing directly across from where I stand today, and in his place he demanded support for this because it would create this mythical 50,000 jobs. They have never materialized. In fact, our previous Auditor General here in the province of Ontario, Jim McCarter, did an assessment of the Green Energy Act, and do you know what he said? He said for every job created by the Green Energy Act, four more are lost because of the extent of the subsidies and what it has done to drive up the price of power in our province. That was a significant concern put forward by the Ontario Pro-

gressive Conservatives and my seatmate, John Yakabuski from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and all of those predictions that we had at the time have come true.

0940

We have stood here in the assembly on two other issues, notably, placing a moratorium on wind turbine developments until proper health effects and environmental effects have been studied. This government put forward a plan without any financial or economic assessment, and they also put forward a plan without any health or environmental impact assessments. What we know today is, whether it is a community that is dealing with turtles that may be almost extinct or birds that are losing their migratory patterns because of these wind turbines—we also know, for example, that there is a group called Mothers Against Wind Turbines because they are concerned about their children living too close to the setbacks, and we talked about those issues as well. At the time, I remember going through the hearings in Ottawa, when committees actually used to travel here in this assembly, and I remember those from NavCan and other airports were concerned about this as well.

So there's a whole set of circumstances that needed to have been studied before we proceeded with this, and we're now just finding out that that hasn't been done. There are impacts, and that's why the Waterloo Institute for Sustainable Energy is studying this, as well as Health Canada. They are now studying this, because they are very concerned with the impacts. Again, we at the time had said those issues needed to be developed.

Those are, I believe, some very significant impacts and arguments that have been made against the Green Energy Act. They were very well thought out at the time. I credit my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and I also credit my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora, who took a special interest in it as well. At the time, we stated these very serious objections, we stated these very serious concerns and we talked about the implications.

Now today, I stand before you, and as I listen to the Minister of Energy, we find out that since 2010, a year after the Green Energy Act was first introduced, they have known that there would have been challenges through the World Trade Organization because of domestic content laws and the protection of contents within the Green Energy Act. They have known since 2010 that they were breaking international law. Now we are faced with a compliance deadline of March 24 and we are not sitting next week. There is a very real possibility that they have known for four years that they were breaking the law, yet are only now, at the eleventh-and-a-half hour, trying to fix the problem and fix it with this piece of legislation.

It's two things. I'm not quite sure we'll actually meet compliance, and secondly, I think I can make the case and lay it out for you why we should actually be rescinding the Green Energy Act rather than just putting forward Bill 153 and amending it simply by removing one clause in the Electricity Act, 1998.

Right now, the minister is saying that we should remove section 25.35 of the Electricity Act which permits the minister to direct the OPA to develop a feed-in tariff program. The bill repeals section 23.353 of the act, which requires the minister to issue and the OPA to follow directions that set out the goals relating to domestic content to be achieved during the period to be covered by the program. The government has known that they have violated the results of the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations for four years.

I'm going to read this section. Folks like to talk, and I notice that the Liberal government chose instead to attack our political party and tell half of the story. Let me tell you a little bit about international trade law. When we begin to mess with international trade law, there are severe repercussions elsewhere in our economy for that, because that allows those complainant countries to retaliate against us and our goods and products. So this is important. I've had several briefings with international trade lawyers because of the severity of this situation.

The issue here is "Review by the Council for Trade in Goods." First, I'll go to "Consultation and Dispute Settlement":

"The provisions of articles XXII and XXIII of GATT 1994, as elaborated and applied by the dispute settlement understanding, shall apply to consultations and the settlement of disputes under this agreement.

"Review by the Council for Trade in Goods

"Not later than five years after the date of entry into force of the WTO agreement, the Council for Trade in Goods shall review the operation of this agreement and, as appropriate, propose to the ministerial conference amendments to its text. In the course of this review, the Council for Trade in Goods shall consider whether the agreement should be complemented with provisions on investment policy and competition policy.

"Illustrative list:

"(1) TRIMs that are consistent with the obligation of national treatment provided for in paragraph 4 of the article III of GATT 1994 include those which are mandatory or enforceable under domestic law or under administrative rulings, or compliance with which is necessary to obtain an advantage and which require:

"(a) the purchase or use by an enterprise of products of domestic origin or from a domestic source, whether specified in terms of particular products, in terms of volume or value of products, or in terms of a proportion of volume or value of its local production; or

"(b) that an enterprise's purchases or use of imported products be limited to an amount related to the volume or value of local products that it exports."

This is right out of the result of the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations. It effectively says you cannot do what the Liberal government did in 2009 in the Green Energy Act. It was the template for how they broke international law, and not long after they put forward the Green Energy Act, Japan and the European Union, two of our largest trading partners, decided to take Canada not Ontario—because this is the first time in

Canadian history a provincial government's policy has broken international law. They appealed against Canada and had to go through arbitration. This is lengthy. It is a serious matter, and they were either too incompetent to understand, or knowingly broke the law. Neither is a flattering picture of a government of Canada's largest province.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They admitted today they knowingly went against it.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My colleagues remind me, once again, that this government admitted today that they knowingly broke the law. They're not happy or satisfied with having one OPP investigation into them on the gas plants and another OPP investigation into them on the Ornge scandal. They now have become international law breakers, and they knowingly broke the law. That's why we have this bill here before us.

So let's go back a little bit, because it was in May 2012 that the WTO ruled that Canada broke international law and broke the trade agreement. They knew they were going to break it. The WTO, in May 2010, adjudicated and ruled that they broke the law—those complaints, as I've stated, came from the European Union and Japan—that our high subsidies for wind and solar projects with domestic content, those protectionist policies broke the law. That's why we have this bill. This is their attempt at compliance on an issue that they have known about since 2010. I cannot state that enough: They knowingly broke the law.

It removes a section from the Electricity Act dealing with domestic content of the FIT program. However, given this legislative timeline and the date that we have for compliance, the Liberals know we have a very slim chance of meeting the compliance deadline by March 24, because they have dragged their feet. I believe it is in order to embarrass the federal government. But at what cost? I ask you, at what cost, Speaker?

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: As the members opposite like to chirp, here are the real costs: If we end up in a trade war, there could be retaliatory measures by Japan and by the European Union. What could they retaliate against? Well, they could retaliate against our automotive industry here in the province of Ontario, which is struggling. What else could they retaliate against? Perhaps our Ontario beef; they could decide to make a retaliatory effort against that.

I look at my colleague from Oxford, who is our agriculture critic; I see my colleague from Perth—Wellington, and I see my colleague from Northumberland—Quinte West. They understand our rural agricultural community. Not only are they dealing with these massive subsidies and the invasion of these wind turbines into their community, they are concerned that if this bill does not pass in time by this government and they do not meet compliance, we will see retaliatory measures on their constituents who are beef farmers. We could also see retaliatory measures against Niagara wine.

This is a reality, and it is the first time in Canadian history that a provincial law has put the Canadian

government into an international situation such as this—an international situation, by the way, which could lead to a massive trade war in retaliation against products that we make right here in Ontario.

What are the other challenges with this bill? Well, I can tell you what they are, Speaker.

0950

First of all, in the briefing I had with the minister's office, the minister's office says to us, "This won't be retroactive. It's any wind turbine development moving forward." The trade lawyers that I consulted with—and I did have several briefings—told me, "Well, that's impossible. We've never, ever heard that, that it's not retroactive."

So let's just be very clear: Any wind turbine that's erected in the province of Ontario today, if it needs to be repaired and the domestic content laws are changed, they can buy that replacement part anywhere in the world, meaning they're probably going to buy it cheaper outside of Ontario than they would here.

It also means people like Samsung and others, who are supposedly building and manufacturing here, are actually going to go somewhere where it's cheaper to make these goods. It means the jobs that these people have suggested they've acquired or created are actually going to leave anyhow. It also means we don't know necessarily if we are going to meet compliance, because they are not rolling these back.

The third thing which I find is most interesting is that the minister here today has suggested that they have made a \$22-billion investment into 1.1% of our energy supply. They could end up ripping up their own contracts. I mean, it's all very convenient for them to pontificate in this assembly that everything bad in the world is Tim Hudak's and Lisa MacLeod's and John Yakabuski's fault, but we all know, when you get beyond the talking points, when you consult with the trade lawyers across this country, the real concern here is threefold. They don't meet compliance: We're in an international trade war. They meet compliance—there are no more domestic provisions—the jobs that they pretend they've created leave. The third issue is, how do we know we are not up for a NAFTA chapter 11 suit following through with this?

These are all very real concerns, and I am very concerned, as an elected member of this assembly and as the energy critic for the official opposition, that that hasn't been thought out by these folks.

Now, I had the opportunity to speak at length, not only with officials from the minister's office; I had an opportunity to speak with trade lawyers here in Toronto from major firms. I also had the opportunity to speak with the Department of Foreign Affairs federally, the department of international trade, and, of course, the Minister of Justice's office, who supplies the lawyers for all of these. Again, they were hoping that this government would actually in good faith comply with the WTO ruling. But it is very clear to me that if they do not comply in an unprecedented way, there's going to have to be federal

intervention in order for us to comply. I think that's a very clear issue that the minister has rejected, it is one that he has ignored and it is one perhaps he just chose not to explore. But, again, it speaks to the competency and the motivation of a government that is so rigid in its ideology that it would rather plunge Canada into an international trade war than actually work in a sophisticated manner in order to alleviate the challenges.

I want to go back. Let's talk a little bit more about the Green Energy Act. I checked the IESO today, the independent electricity supply organization. They tell me that our nuclear capacity today is at 51.3%. Hydro is 24.1% of our capacity. Gas is 22.2%. Hold your hats, folks. Hold your hats, because for \$22 billion, this Liberal government can get you 1.1% capacity of wind and solar in the province of Ontario. They are telling us that they're going to stand here for \$22 billion so that we have 1.1% of our capacity on our grid today.

They have wasted our money. They could put us into a trade war. They have cost us jobs. They are forcing seniors out of their homes because they can't afford their heat and hydro. That is the Green Energy Act. That is why we're here today. That is the big problem we have.

So we have a government that has completely eroded the confidence of the people in this province in its ability to manage the electricity system, and all they can do is stand here with platitudes, rhetoric and anger about a decade ago. I have news for them, Speaker: For the last decade, they've been in power. For the last decade, they've doubled the deficit. For the last decade, they've doubled the debt. For the last decade, our taxes have gone up. For the last decade, we have seen our hydro increase to the point that many in Ontario who are on a fixed income—and our seniors are seeing that their old age security cheque is less than their hydro bill.

Their solution to all that ails the electricity system in Ontario is the removal of one section in the Electricity Act of 1998. It's a pretty sad state of affairs when a government, elected by the people for the people, can so quickly abandon those people.

Bill 153 has little chance of meeting the compliance deadline because this Liberal government would rather pick a fight with Stephen Harper than do their job. This Liberal government chose a Green Energy Act that cost Ontario dearly because of a rigid ideology. This Liberal government would stand here and blame everything on Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservatives rather than take responsibility for themselves, because they know they have led us astray.

I want to talk about dirty coal for a second, because I think I've heard a lot of rhetoric from the member opposite. I remember running on platforms where we would end coal, but not only did we run on a platform to end coal, we ran on a record. We were the first party in Ontario to start decommissioning coal-fired plants. That's an inconvenient truth by a government that doesn't want to tell the whole story. But I know Elizabeth Witmer. He is no Elizabeth Witmer. I can tell you something: When she sat here in this assembly, she was the first to move us

in that direction. They don't want to tell the whole story because it doesn't fit the narrative that they want to talk about.

But if they want to talk about children's health, I'll talk about a child's health. I'll talk about Madi Vanstone, who every day we've brought up in the assembly here. I can't help but think that the Ontario that I live in, the Ontario that I'm raising my daughter in, is spending \$22 billion for 1% of energy to make Liberal friends rich when little girls in this province who need life-saving drugs can't get them. And why can't she get them? Because this Premier said it costs too much. She said that it costs too much; we couldn't afford it. We could afford to make Mike Crawley a rich man, we can afford to make NextEra a rich company and we can ensure that Samsung basically has a seat at the cabinet table here, but apparently our government cannot and will not choose to support a child who needs help. That's the reality that we're in in Ontario today. People can't understand it. It was well documented, I thought, by Christina Blizzard. I thought she laid out the case on that quite clearly, and I thought that she pointed out what most people in Ontario are saying.

You look at the cost of power now—and I had the opportunity to speak to the supply motion, I guess it was a week ago. I talked about the opportunity I had to visit many of my colleagues' ridings and talk to many people who are in their communities, and we talked about the high cost of energy and how that is hurting the people of this province and hurting manufacturers, and we talked about what our plan would be.

We've written a number of white papers. Some of them were just, effectively, ideas that we put forward that we'll run on; others were ideas for discussion that we've talked about. But, very clearly, people are looking for a rational solution to the mismanagement by the government.

We've put forward a number of, I think, very thoughtful ideas and very sensible ideas to review not only the existing Green Energy Act—I think we've been very clear that we would repeal it—but we also talked about looking at some of the entities that we have in Ontario, like the OPG and Hydro One, monetizing them to bring more accountability. We know that there are some very serious and straightforward concerns there. We know, for example, that we're exporting about \$1 billion worth of power.

I get a kick out of it. I see that the leader of the third party is saying that she's going to end this \$1 billion worth of subsidies. Where the heck does she think the subsidies are coming from? We're overproducing power because we've got this wind and solar program that she has supported. She wants to get rid of the export, but what are we going to do with the power? Is she going to build storage we can't afford? Is she going to subsidize that? She is so incoherent it's not funny. In fact, she actually puts silliness in front of stupidity, because if I would consider these guys to be the latter, they would certainly be the former, and I can tell you, Speaker, that

is just not going to go over very well with the people of the province. I think they have seen and they have heard enough.

1000

I'd like to read into the record a couple things. I'm not sure when you're going to cut me off. I do know we're close to 10 o'clock, so if I'm going to have about 10 more minutes, that's great. But I wanted to talk about the Ottawa Council of Business Improvement Areas, and perhaps the minister would like to respond at some point to this organization that wrote him a letter on December 9—a very real organization that impacts his constituents as well as mine. I'm going to read into the record just some excerpts of their concerns that they put forward in the letter, but they also took the time to meet with Tim Hudak and myself in Ottawa. This is what they say:

"It should be stated that the OCOBIA is a volunteer organization representing 18 business improvement areas across urban, suburban and rural Ottawa that account for nearly \$4.5 billion commercial, office, shopping centres and industrial property assessment. The businesses which our BIAs represent are not exclusively retailers but also include professional and personal services such as health clinics and Legions."

They talk about small business in Ontario, and then they say this:

"I'm sure you would agree that it is unfair to those 97% of taxing operators that they should ever need to make the decision whether to close their doors permanently, lay off employees or pay their Ontario hydro bill. We are asking you, please do not work against Ontario small businesses.... Our government should be supporting our businesses, not aiding in their demise.... We urge you to please work on the side of Ottawa retailers, on the side of job creators and on the side of Ottawa employees and reconsider your government's crippling hydro increases."

AMPCO, the Association of Major Power Consumers of Ontario, I'm going to quote them:

"AMPCO's latest benchmarking analysis compares Ontario's industrial rates with those in other provinces in Canada as well as selected US markets. Our analysis shows that Ontario has the highest industrial rates in North America. Ontario not only has the highest delivered rates of all these jurisdictions; the disparity in rates also is growing."

The Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association says that in Ontario, we are at some points 129% higher than some US jurisdictions.

Going back to AMPCO:

"Industrial customers in Ontario face the highest delivered cost of power among the provinces compared.... The cost of power ... for large and small industrial customers remains significantly higher than comparable rates in US markets."

"AMPCO estimated the cost of power for a typical industrial customer in US markets: New York, New England (including 6 states), the Midwest (including 15 states), markets served by the PJM System Operator ... and the Electric Reliability Council of Texas....

"The highest delivered cost of power in the US markets selected ... was \$20 lower per MWh than the comparable rate for an industrial customer in Ontario."

So the highest is still \$20 a megawatt lower than it is in our province. This is troubling. It validates all of those concerns that we have had in the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party with respect to high energy rates and the global adjustment and what the cost of power is doing to our manufacturers and our power consumers, but it also speaks to why the Green Energy Act needs to be abolished. And when I get back to Bill 153, I think, well, that's fine and good if you sort of want to maybe, whatever, some way down the road, think about compliance. Well, I guess that's your choice. But if you want to show the world that you're serious about getting hydro rates under control, that you're serious about meeting your international trade obligations, that you're serious about bringing back the jobs, then you will get rid of the Green Energy Act in its entirety.

This is a province that cannot continue to afford this reckless spending. I go back to that \$22 billion—\$22 billion for 1.1% of power. I couldn't think of a bigger waste of money. That's 20 cancelled gas plants. You know what the minister said? I should send—can I have a page, please? The Minister of Energy told us that the cancelled gas plants were just a cup of coffee. I'll send this over. He could win a free cup of coffee a year from Tim Hortons, because that's what the province of Ontario wants to tell him. They're tired of these silly games by this Liberal government. They're tired of the mismanagement.

You think about this: He has just acknowledged in this House that to create 1.1% of power is \$22 billion. They had to acknowledge, albeit it was the Auditor General who forced them, that it was \$1.1 billion for them to save five seats. With that amount of waste and that amount of mismanagement, we could not only eradicate our deficit, but we could make significant investments into our communities in health care and education, and we would still have power that we wouldn't have to export. A novel idea, Speaker, but that is the reality; it is the truth, and it is something that we have said consistently—and the only party to do so since 2009.

That's why we stand here day in and day out. We stand for the people in Strathroy and Stratford. We talk to the people in Cobourg, the people in Oxford and the people in Barry's Bay. We talk about the people who are opposing these high subsidies and who are opposing these invasions on their land. We talk to them. We ask them to stay in Ontario and make sure that they continue to support us so that we can change this.

I see my colleague from Leeds–Grenville is here. I had a great meeting, I think it was before Christmas, with some manufacturers in his riding. They handed me a sheet, not unlike this one, that showed 10 Fortune 500 companies that left Brockville in the last decade—major employers in Brockville. They left, and why? They said: the high cost of hydro. They then showed me another sheet that came from the neighbouring community across

the St. Lawrence, which is an American state in upstate New York. They were telling Ontario businesses to relocate because they could guarantee cheaper power.

My colleague comes here every day, and he stands and defends the people of Leeds and Grenville. He defends those businesses—small, medium and, in this case, very large. He knows the number one issue for them staying and creating and maintaining the jobs in Ontario today is the high cost of energy, and he has fought for them. I couldn't tell you how much of an impact that had, other than I can bring it to the floor of this assembly. That is the real challenge with their bill, with what's happening.

My colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry is not, at the moment, in the chamber, but I want to talk about going into his riding. We met with a local mayor of Long Sault. They had a round table. The mayor's mother was there, and she was beside herself—a senior. She was the one who first told me, "I'm getting an OAS cheque, and it is not covering my hydro bill. It is higher." When you sit there, their number one issue—and they equate the high cost of hydro at Hydro One and they equate this Green Energy Act as the cause of that skyrocketing bill.

1010

These aren't people who have major policy analysts employed for them. They're senior citizens. They're sitting there, opening up their bill from Hydro One that's higher than it has ever been—in some cases, 600 bucks, 900 bucks, 1,200 bucks. They don't need a high-priced analyst from the University of Toronto to sit there and review the bill and tell them where the increase is coming from. They can tell, when they see the wind turbine development or the solar panel farm crop up, that somebody is paying them exorbitant fees in order for them to build these monstrosities. Those seniors are subsidizing it. The Ontario government is not subsidizing it. The Ontario government is only as good as the people who pay in to the government, and it's only as wealthy as the amount of people who are able to pay in to the government. When those folks who have no extra money can continue to subsidize, that's who they're hurting.

I've talked a little bit about health care, and I've talked a little bit about seniors, and I've talked about the impact on small business. It's only going to get worse if we do not comply with World Trade Organization laws. If we do not comply, the high hydro rates, the job losses, the health and scientific and environmental effects, the arrogance which our small rural communities are being challenged with—it's all going to get worse, because they will have put us in a trade war. There will be real concerns for those communities who build cars, who farm beef, who grow wine.

Let me be abundantly clear, Speaker: This is a government who is too concerned with its own ideology, and too concerned with its buddies that they could make a little bit more rich, that they had no concern whatsoever about the people paying the bill; that they have no concern whatsoever of the broader implications in an international trade war that they have now thrust us into. They

don't care, Speaker. They didn't do their job at the beginning. They're not doing their job now, they didn't do their job then, and everybody in Ontario is paying for it.

You know what? They cling to the hope that saint Kathleen is going to actually win a by-election or, possibly, somehow miraculously eke out an election win so they can come back here and subsidize more things and then send jobs elsewhere.

I would say right now that my friend Steve Clark is probably saying that the business person of the year in Massena is Kathleen Wynne. In Massena, New York, she is probably business person of the year. I can tell you, having sat down with the people in Brockville, that is the truth.

I can tell you right now that my friend Bob Bailey, from Sarnia, could probably tell you that she's also, in Detroit, the business person of the year, because he's seeing businesses in his community leaving and going across the border.

I can tell you that our new friend Wayne Gates, from Niagara, probably is going to tell us that she's business person of the year over in Buffalo too, just like Bob Rae was, back in the 1990s, sending the jobs south.

People in Ontario, job creators in Ontario, manufacturers in Ontario, can't afford this expensive green energy experiment. In fact, it has failed in so many ways, it's amazing that they're still clinging to it on life support. I mean, think about it.

I'm going to close on this, but it's going to take me until you shut me down, Speaker, to finish. I'm going to close on this.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm going to close on this—for the third time. We said that the Green Energy Act would increase hydro rates by 50%, in 2009, and it has. We said that stripping away locally based decision-making from municipalities would cause major disruptions in rural Ontario, and it has. Seventy-two communities have signed Not a Willing Host.

We said there would be health and environmental impacts that need to be studied. They didn't do it. Now the federal government has to do it, and a university in Ontario has to do it. We said it. We said it. That's what's happening.

We said that this job-killing policy would cost us jobs. The Auditor General has said that for every job these guys pretend to create, we lose four more. During their tenure, we lost 330,000 manufacturing jobs and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order, the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —unanimous consent to let her continue debating.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'm sorry; I can't accept your point of order.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome today to the Legislature Ducks Unlimited Canada, who are here on a lobby day. Many of them are over here in the audience in the members' gallery. They are celebrating their 75th anniversary and they have a reception here today both at 12:30 in room 230 and tonight from 4:30 until 7 o'clock in the legislative dining room. I hope everyone can come out and visit and listen to the issues and the concerns that are faced by this great conservation organization we have here in Ontario and Canada. Welcome to Queen's Park, everyone.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's my pleasure to introduce a good friend of mine from my old CBC days, a constituent of Mr. Holyday's in Etobicoke—Lakeshore. Leroy Siemon is here this morning to see what goes on in question period.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, on behalf of the member for Peterborough, I'm pleased to introduce not merely our existing page captain, Nik Skilton, but his mother, Mary Anna Zakula, who will be in the public gallery this morning. I welcome them to the Legislature.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I just want to welcome to Queen's Park a very good friend of mine, Mr. Paul Norris from the Ontario Waterpower Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur—Nickel Belt?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's what I said.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Okay, merci.

Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à tous les étudiants qui sont ici pour le Parlement jeunesse francophone. Du Conseil scolaire catholique du Nouvel-Ontario, Collège Notre-Dame, on a Benjamin Doudard et Chad Savard, et de l'École secondaire catholique Champlain, on a Sylvie Rachelle Bigras. C'est leur première visite à Queen's Park. J'espère que vous allez leur souhaiter la bienvenue, et on invite tout le monde à la réception ce soir pour le Parlement jeunesse francophone.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Good morning, Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, I'd like to welcome Nadia Fordham here from Etobicoke. I'm not sure if she's in the gallery yet, but welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure this morning to welcome to Queen's Park Garry and Janice Jordan, constituents of mine from Sarnia—Lambton, from the village of Wyoming. Welcome.

M. Gilles Bisson: Pour ne pas être en conflit avec la députée de Nickel Belt, j'aimerais dire bonjour aux élèves qui sont ici de Hearst, de Kap et de Timmins pour le parlement des jeunes. Puis on regarde avec anticipation de les rencontrer un peu plus tard.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome to Queen's Park Chris Drummond, who is a teacher at a great Ottawa Centre high school called Nepean High School. He's part of the Ducks Unlimited delegation today.

Mr. Todd Smith: On behalf of our member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, I'd like to welcome the family of page captain Samer El-Galmady: mother Hadir Ashry and father Ahmed El-Galmady, both in the Legislature this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to welcome my guests who are sitting in the east gallery. They are from my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt and they are students and their teacher from Sir John A. Macdonald, students Nagma Mathur and Michelle Tom, and their teacher, Matthew Sheehan. They are here also participating in the Ducks Unlimited "show and tell" this afternoon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to introduce on behalf of Anne Lafaury, our page, her mother, Fionnuala Donaghy, and her grandmother Maureen Donaghy. They will be in the members' gallery this morning.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to welcome anyone here this morning who has had the good fortune to receive the crucifix on their forehead with holy ashes to commence the holy season of Lent today.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm very pleased to welcome to the Legislature today the very hard-working members of the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat liaison committee, and the various organizations and representatives which are about to make their way into the House now from the National Association of Federal Retirees, the Older Women's Network organization, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, the united seniors council of Ontario, the Councils on Aging Network of Ontario, Ontario Society of Senior Citizens' Organizations, Quarter Century Club, la Fédération des aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario and the Multicultural Council for Ontario Seniors. I'd like to welcome all of them here today, and I hope they have a wonderful time.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Please join me in welcoming today the parents of Sarah Forbes, a page here in our Legislative Assembly. With us today is Robin Forbes, her mother; Chris Forbes, her father; and her young brother Liam is here as well. Thank you guys for being here today.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'd like to welcome students from Perth Avenue public school to the Legislature today.

UKRAINIAN FLAG

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings on a point of order.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given the rising tensions in eastern Europe—and I know that all three parties in this Legislature have spoken in support of the people of Ukraine and the tensions that are rising there, the world focusing on the invasion of Ukraine—I would ask that this Legislature seek unanimous consent to fly the Ukrainian flag on the courtesy pole for one week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings has requested permission for unanimous consent to fly the Ukrainian—before I get to

that, I want to entertain, on the same point of order, the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're certainly, on this side of the House, supportive of this. Members may know that we've reached out and are in the process of actually drafting a letter to you, which I understand is another way to do that, which would express the interest of all parties to go forward—just so members are aware of that. But obviously, the member is bringing that forward, and we're very supportive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): House leader of the third party and member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to say we wholeheartedly support that, in order to give some solidarity to those people who are struggling to have the democracy that we have in this country. Whatever way we do it that makes the most sense is what we would support as New Democrats.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask for your indulgence to provide you with feedback and seek your direction. Since it's a country flag and the process that we already used is doable, it only requires a letter from the House leaders to proceed. Unanimous consent is not necessary; it's not required.

However, I do need more specific information inside of that unanimous consent if I'm getting a sense that the House is willing to move in that direction immediately, or we could defer the unanimous consent to allow the House leaders to complete the letter and send it through.

I'm going to be at the will of the House to allow me to do that. I would ask the member to decide how he wants to proceed. If he does, then we will. If he doesn't, we'll allow the House leaders to complete that task, and it doesn't require unanimous consent. So if the member would like to comment, I'll defer back to him.

1040

Mr. Todd Smith: I would ask that the question be put and that we seek unanimous consent to fly the flag of Ukraine for one week on the courtesy flagpole.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Can you be more specific? Can you give me the date? The date in which the one week—

Mr. Todd Smith: Okay. Beginning today until the Legislature resumes sitting.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't want to get picky, but you have to understand that we need that kind of clarity. So if it's to resume, it means we resume tomorrow.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Seven days starting today. I'm trying to be helpful but make sure that we understand and we do this right. So the unanimous consent stands, and the member from Prince Edward–Hastings is seeking unanimous consent, starting today for seven days, that we fly the Ukrainian flag on the courtesy pole. Do we agree? Agreed. Thank you.

This is somewhat of a slight throwback to the comment that I had made in one of my rulings in that I was

basically making sure that, if we co-operate in this manner, which is what happened today—that is, if we converse with our House leaders to ensure that we might know, or we don't know, what's going on at that level, it would be very appropriate for us to all co-operate with that process. I will sit down for a moment.

The simplest of things can be turned into something more complex. I've been briefed that there are a few occasions where the courtesy flag has already been committed to be used during that time frame. Will we adopt the same process that we did for the games, meaning that the flag will come down, the courtesy flag will go up for the people that have booked it, then come down and the Ukrainian flag goes back up? Are we in agreement? Agreed. Thank you all.

ORAL QUESTIONS

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the education minister. Minister, the government is spending \$8.5 billion per year more on education than it did in 2003, while we have 250,000 fewer students, and our students are falling behind in math. To be clear, we're spending way more on education, serving fewer students and math achievement is worse today. My question to the minister is a simple one. How can you justify spending more money while our students are doing worse?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Oh, my goodness, where do I start? Okay. So let's just deal, first of all, with what we got for more money. What we've gotten for more money is the roll-in of the full-day kindergarten program, which we understand you want to get rid of, but that's what you got. What you got was a whole bunch of new programs called specialist high skills majors, which help teach kids practical skills in areas that they might want to pursue as careers. What you got was a high school graduation rate that rose—do you know what it was when they were in charge of education? One third of the kids in this province did not graduate from high school. Now—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: What we got was our students doing worse today than they did in 2003. It's not only parents and students who are concerned but business leaders as well. Let me read you a quote. "It's time to stop congratulating ourselves on the quality of our primary, secondary and post-secondary education systems and face up to the fact that our performance in international rankings is getting worse, not better." Who said that, Mr. Speaker? It was the former Liberal Deputy Prime Minister, John Manley. Unfortunately, that's exactly what your government has been doing for the last decade, as our students continue to look less and less competitive on the world stage.

Minister, isn't a decade long enough? How many years have to go by before you take students' performance seriously and fix the problems in our education system?

Hon. Liz Sandals: He actually needs little bit more information here. If he would look at the EQAO performance—something that you brought in, I might add—at the end of their mandate, about half of the kids in the province were reaching the provincial standard, which is quite a high standard. It's an A or a B for those of us who still think in old letter grades. Now, 71% of the students are meeting the provincial standard. I really wish that the people across the aisle would stop trashing our public education system and actually look at what's really going on.

In fact, I was interested to note today that when he was talking about school performance on PISA, he did say that the score had fallen 16 points. He didn't tell you that that was on a scale that was 16 out of about 700.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I can't believe what I'm hearing from the education system. A 16-point drop in our scores is actually a good thing? What's going on here?

Today, the Ontario PC caucus unveiled our math achievement action plan, which provides proven solutions to the problems that students have been facing over the last 10 years. When it comes to mathematics, our students are not performing at the level they should be. Numeracy and literacy skills are crucial to both individual job success and our province's economic growth. The fact that our students are slipping when it comes to basic math skills is beyond troubling.

Our plan focuses on the fundamentals and gives students the support and education they need as they move through high school to post-secondary education and into the job market. Teaching the times tables, rewarding the best teachers and prioritizing students over union bosses is the only way to get our students and schools back on track.

Minister, will you support our math achievement action plan?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Actually, I kind of thought he was supporting my plan, because I've been saying for the last couple of months that we need balanced instruction, and part of that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton, come to order.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Part of that, Speaker, is that kids learn times tables. We agree: Kids should learn times tables. But we also think that kids should understand the basic concepts so that they can understand more sophisticated concepts and so that they can achieve what the

chambers of commerce all across the province are asking for: that we have graduates who have critical thinking skills and who can apply those math concepts to do actual problem-solving. That's what employers tell us they want.

We also believe you should support teachers. He wants to do it with performance pay if they get better math scores. I want to invest in teacher training—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, you're the leader of the Pan Am baby-sitting team. The minister reports bi-weekly to you, chair of the treasury board. So are you the one coaching him to fudge the numbers?

We've seen security move from \$113 million to \$206 million to \$239 million. Transportation has moved from \$55 million, according to documents last July, to between \$75 million and \$90 million. I can't wait for the next milestone update on that one, really.

In the real world, the plan is supposed to fit the budget. You don't update the budget to fit the plan—the Liberal way.

Minister, you're just as guilty. At which point is it public misfeasance?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I move to the Minister of Finance, I just want to warn the member that he's on the edge when he makes that kind of allegation. I would ask him to temper his question and his comments under those circumstances. I appreciate his co-operation.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to congratulate the minister responsible for the Pan and Parapan American Games. That individual is a man of great integrity. He's a man of great sensitivity, and he's a new Canadian, like many others who come to this country looking for opportunity and equality.

1050

He has done everything he can to be inclusive and to invite many to participate in these games and in the economy of Ontario. I'm very proud of the work that the minister of the Pan/Parapan American Games and Minister of Tourism does to represent our province and our country. It's shameful what the member opposite has been trying to do to characterize this man as anything but an honourable individual. He's doing a good job for the Pan Am Games. He's being very open and transparent, and he's doing everything necessary to protect the interests of our province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Only in this Liberal world that we live in down here would you actually congratulate the

minister responsible for the Pan Am Games for this debacle.

Yesterday, TO2015 released their quarterly report. Apparently, three venues still have outstanding contracts. We also learned this week that a major milestone in security has been achieved—a security contract was almost reached. That almost contract is costing us taxpayers another \$33 million somehow. Honestly, you're 17 months away with contracts still pending. How can you possibly carry on like you're still on budget?

By the way, TO2015 has already reported one project over budget, and apparently half of the total spending hasn't even happened yet. Pan Am is a black hole, plain and simple.

Minister, once and for all, who is responsible for the Pan Am mismanagement anyway?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Pan Am/Parapan American Games—all the venues that we've been providing in the southern corridor of Ontario around many communities are to benefit not just during the games but during the legacy of these games and in the future. We now have communities that are going to benefit from an aquatic centre that is second to none in North America. We're going to have an all-season velodrome in the town of Milton that's going to provide access to many in that community and around the world to come and train. We're going to be able to provide venues for our athletes all over Canada to be able to train and perform and succeed in Ontario and in Canada.

They are on time. They are under budget. In fact, all those capital improvements have occurred as necessary. And of course, there are certain things that we're going to do going forward, including security and transportation, to protect the interests of the public.

I'm very proud of what Ontario is going to do to represent Canada in the future of these games next year, and so should they.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Maybe the Minister of Finance should actually read the financial update that came out yesterday.

Speaker, here's another one: The government invested \$709 million tax dollars in the athletes' village to benefit from the return on investment. But we know that if something looks too good to be true, it probably is, especially coming from this government. We will only ever see a fraction of it again: between \$65 million and \$70 million of that \$709 million.

To put it plainly, Ontario could have funded 2,085 new doctors this year or paid for medicine for almost 2,000 kids like Madi Vanstone. So who is benefiting from the remainder of our invested money? Yes, another generous Liberal donation to the private sector.

Honestly, if Chan isn't job-searching today, then you should be, Minister. Which one of you is going to step down over this?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Sit down, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Pan Am village is going to provide social housing. It's going to provide a YMCA. It's going to provide a residence for students at George Brown College. It's going to provide a cultural centre. It's going to provide so much vibrancy in that community and on our waterfront. It accelerated the development of that area for the future benefit of all Torontonians, Ontarians and Canadians because of the attraction it's going to bring. That is a legacy that is going to be left behind in those respects.

I am so proud of the work being done by Toronto 2015. I recognize that there are always things that can be done better, and we're doing just that. That's why we have put in a new chair. We have a new president, and we have a team out there that's doing what is necessary to provide great games in 2015. The member opposite knows this. We've invited him to briefings. He has chosen not to read them.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

I'm also going to take a moment just to remind members that I do—I'm trying to be forceful about this. Please use either the title or the riding when you refer to any member in this House during question period or any other time. I don't want to keep reminding people. It's tiring.

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Does the Acting Premier think families in Ontario should be paying a billion-dollar subsidy for power that lights up the Manhattan skyline?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm afraid, once again, the leader of the third party just has her facts wrong—completely wrong. When it comes to energy exports, we do not subsidize exports to other jurisdictions. The leader of the third party has mixed up something pretty important. She hasn't taken the net benefit of our exports. In fact, since 2006, the independent electricity system operator has made over \$2 billion in net revenue from those energy exports.

So once again, we have a party with no plan, no ideas and no facts, unfortunately.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the people of Ontario certainly know what they're paying for when they pay for the Liberal boondoggle in the electricity system these days.

Does the Acting Premier think that families and businesses in Ontario are being well served when private power speculators are profiting from electricity that On-

tario ratepayers are subsidizing? That's a fact. Does she support that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The private sector has been investing tens of billions of dollars in Ontario energy, in various ways. I'd like to ask the leader of the third party: Where will she find that type of investment in the future in government? Where will the money come from?

Most importantly, she refers to hydro rates. I don't know where the NDP gets their figures from, but Hydro-Québec conducts a study of electricity prices in major North American cities every year. It's available on their website for anybody to look at. Here are some of the numbers from the 2013 comparison for residential customers: Ottawa, 12.39 cents per kilowatt hour; Toronto, 12.48 cents per kilowatt hour; Edmonton, 13.9 cents; Calgary, 14.81 cents; Halifax, 15.45 cents; Detroit, to look across the border, 15.54—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Other provinces are actually making money on exporting electricity and passing the savings on to consumers in their jurisdictions. But here in Ontario, it's costing us over \$1 billion for private power speculators to dump our power into the US, and people are paying the highest bills in the country. We simply cannot afford that any longer.

Does the Acting Premier agree that the status quo isn't working and it's time to take hydro sales out of the hands of private power speculators and start saving money for Ontario's ratepayers?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We provided a briefing on the export of electricity to the critic for the third party. He obviously has not briefed his leader, because last year alone, exports reduced costs for Ontarians by \$300 million in 2013. It's been billions over the last decade.

Again, I want to repeat the numbers. The numbers—she just said again, we have the most expensive electricity rates in Canada. You know what, Mr. Speaker? The numbers belie that statement. I just read the numbers city by city and I didn't finish them. The accusation that we're selling cheap electricity across the border—in Detroit, they pay 15.54 cents; Boston, 16.5 cents; New York, 21.75 cents. Our rates are extremely competitive.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier, and I think it's pretty clear that Liberals play with figures quite a bit. The only figures that are important to Ontarians are the figures they see when they open their hydro bill, which they can't afford anymore.

People paying the highest electricity bills in the country, in fact, are looking for some relief. All they see is a bloated alphabet soup of agencies and executives who are collecting even more bloated pay packages. Other provinces are able to provide lower rates and even turn a profit on their exports at a fraction of the cost, which is an important factor.

Does the Acting Premier think that her current status quo is actually working for Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We're very focused on the issue that the leader of the third party raised, and that is that people are feeling stretched. When they do open those hydro bills, there's cause for concern. That's why we've taken the steps we have. The clean energy benefit has saved Ontarians an average of \$174 per year, and since we introduced it it has saved Ontario ratepayers \$2.4 billion. On top of that, decisions that have been made will mean customers will pay \$520 less over the next few years than compared to previous estimates. That's amending the domestic content rules; it's updating the Samsung contract; it's not proceeding with new nuclear. A range of decisions have been made that have the impact of reducing those hydro bills.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals have been promising to cap public sector CEO pay for years now, but when they had an option to vote for a public sector CEO pay cap, they voted against it. For over 10 years, the Liberals have insisted that they won't tolerate sky-high hydro salaries, and for over 10 years, the sky has been the limit. What explanation can the Acting Premier offer to the families of businesses who are stuck paying the bills for these sky-high salaries?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We look closely at what opposition parties present in terms of policy ideas and, sadly, there's not much to learn from the NDP policy on this. Their approach will do very little to reduce—in fact, it will do nothing to reduce rates for people. They seem to oppose nuclear. We're not sure where they are on green energy. I think the only thing that the NDP actually are in favour of when it comes to producing power is gerbil power. I think their idea must be a bunch of little rodents on little wheels producing power, because they seem to be opposed to every kind of electricity generation. I think it's time we heard from the NDP what their plan is. What is their plan for power production in the province of Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What New Democrats are opposed to is Liberal waste and disrespect of the people who pay the bills in this province. That's what we're opposed to.

Today, I did actually lay out some pretty simple steps that we could take to make sure that life is more affordable for people who are paying the bills. Perhaps the minister wasn't paying attention. It's time to start cleaning up the mess in our hydro system instead of hiking the pay and million-dollar bonuses of those top CEOs. It's time to make the bills a little more affordable for the people in Ontario instead of forcing families to pay for cheaper power in New York.

Now, is the Acting Premier ready to take some action on this file, or is she going to keep defending a status quo that isn't working for people and that continues to waste

their money and allows CEO salaries and bonuses to climb sky high?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Deputy Premier alluded to the fact that the third party has no policy on energy. Well, they took a first baby step yesterday when the leader of the third party sent a letter to the Premier making some suggestions for the electricity system. One of the suggestions was to issue, once a year, a \$100 cheque to all the electricity customers in the province. That \$100 cheque will cost half a billion dollars. So I have a question for the leader of the third party: Will she get that on the rate base from the Ontario Energy Board and let the other consumers of electricity pay for it? Or will she get it on the fiscal side and find half a billion dollars? Where will you find half a billion dollars? By raising taxes? What will you cut?

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, you and the Premier say you're going to push hard to cover the cost of Kalydeco for 12-year-old Madi Vanstone and others with cystic fibrosis. It has been seven months since I first raised this issue with you, and what have you done? Nothing.

Who do you think you're fooling with this charade? You're the only one who can make this decision, not Alberta, not the Pan-Canadian Pricing Alliance, but you. You're the health minister. Health care and the well-being of little Madi are your responsibility. Stop playing games. Stop stringing Madi and her friends along. Make a decision. Are you going to cover Kalydeco?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As a former health minister, you know as well as anyone that these are difficult decisions that come to health ministers. We have taken the politics out of determining what drugs we cover and what drugs we don't—based on evidence. I can tell you that Kalydeco is a very promising drug that offers real hope and better outcomes for patients, which is why we are working at a pan-Canadian level to be able to purchase this drug.

I think it's really important that the member opposite understands that we have had great success working on a pan-Canadian basis to get better prices for drugs. It's time for Vertex, the US-based manufacturer of this drug, a publicly traded company, to step up and participate in these negotiations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: That answer simply isn't good enough. Yes, I am a former health minister. In the past, we would cover the drug for extraordinary circumstances. Once we had a number of patients on the drug, we would work with other provinces to go back and say, "We're your number one worldwide customer. Give us a better price." And we would often get a better price.

You created this Pan-Canadian Pricing Alliance so that you and other health ministers across the country, I guess, can hide behind it. At the end of the day, no matter

what any other province says and no matter what this committee says, you and you alone will make the decision on whether you will fund Kalydeco.

It's a smokescreen you put up. Madi is not buying it. Other children who need help are not buying it. No one on this side of the House is buying it, and none of your people should be buying it either.

At the end of the day, it's your decision. Will you do the right thing and help Madi and her friends?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's important that the member opposite recognize that the Pan-Canadian Pricing Alliance, so far, has saved Canadians \$50 million as they have worked to negotiate the best possible price for 29 drugs. What that means is that we can fund more drugs for more people.

I do want to remind the former Minister of Health—I have a quote from Hansard from 1996 here. The then Minister of Health said, "As you know, the Minister of Health doesn't directly approve the alternative. The medical committee that's called the Drug Quality and Therapeutics Committee, which is the same committee that's been around for many years ... makes the final determination."

This member opposite is playing politics. I find that offensive. We are doing what we can for Madi and for all people who need access to these rare drugs.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Ontarians look at their hydro bills every day, and they see them going up. They see that they're paying the highest bills in Canada, and yet we're going to get another 42% increase as a result of this government's policies. Does the energy minister agree that it's time to hit the pause button on new private contracts until Ontario's Auditor General reviews the private power contracts in Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have a hybrid system in Ontario. The OPG and Hydro One make major investments in Ontario. The private sector also invests in Ontario. The private sector is a big part of the billions of dollars of investments in the sector.

I asked the leader of the third party, and I'll ask this particular member: Where will you find the replacement investment dollars? Do you know how much you will have to replace in Ontario in energy investment if the private sector is not investing? Please answer the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Coming from the government that cost the Ontario ratepayers over \$1 billion for cancelled contracts in this province, this is a bit much. What's clear here is that the government has messed up this entire file. What we're saying is that you've got to hit the pause button on the continuation of putting out these contracts. So I ask you again: Will the Premier and her government agree to have the Auditor General look at all of Ontario's private power contracts to ask whether we can get a better deal?

Interjections.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask that the supplementary dialogue that's going on between the two caucuses stop while the question is being put.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I've said on a number of occasions we have three priorities, equal priorities: to have a reliable system—we did not have a reliable system when this government took over; secondly, to have a clean system, and we did not have a clean system when this government took over; and thirdly, to have affordable electricity rates in the province of Ontario.

Our \$31 billion of investment put pressure on our hydro rates, and we've created price mitigation measures to help the residents of this province, including the Ontario energy and property tax credit, which that party voted against.

I would like to know if you're informing your constituents of the programs that are available to mitigate their price in terms of tax credits, particularly in the north—and I speak to this member, Mr. Speaker—because they are getting a lot of credits, and it's making a big difference in price mitigation to your constituents.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Like many days, this morning I got on the GO train to come to work. I can tell you it was standing room only on the GO train, a testimony to the popularity of GO Transit in my riding. It's also a testimony to the way suburbs like Mississauga are being transformed because of the investments made by the Liberal government in public transit.

Would the minister please tell this Legislature the string of investments we have made in and around Mississauga when it comes to GO Transit?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We have now taken our trains from 10 train units to 12 train units. We have added more trains now on the Milton line, which is a very popular line. We are now adding and expanding parking facilities and better integrating and coordinating with the regional and local transit authorities. The totality of investments at this point in GO will, within the next year, be over \$10 billion. It's the largest expansion of GO.

We are also working with the region of Peel and the city of Mississauga in communities for what we're calling huburbia, which is to actually bring more jobs and create employment sectors. That's a collaboration, and I want to give a shout-out not just to the member but also to Mayor McCallion and our friends in Mississauga who are leading the reurbanization and expanding the employment base and jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I want to thank the minister for that very comprehensive answer.

Now, the fact of the matter is that as popular as the GO train is for bringing people from Mississauga into Toronto, the reality is that people in Mississauga today

are increasingly working not just in Toronto but across the GTHA, and I have my constituents going to Hamilton, going to Orangeville, going to Vaughan. I'd like to ask the minister what investments he is making in transit across southwestern Ontario, because I know this is important for my constituents.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I had the great pleasure of joining my friend the member for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale, which not only has a long name but now has long trains going into Hamilton. We were there for the unveiling and the construction start of the new Hamilton GO station, which is an architectural jewel, and we were looking at it right beside what we now call the unistation, the old Grand Trunk station, and that is amazing.

We are going to have four more trains going into Hamilton, and we're now moving ahead with the acquisition of track between Aldershot and Hamilton to get Hamilton fully integrated into the Lakeshore line.

It doesn't stop there. I want to give a special shout-out to my friend from Kitchener Centre and Regional Chair Seiling and Mayor Zehr of Kitchener, because they approved yesterday the final approvals for the Kitchener–Waterloo LRT, which will connect to our new GO service. This is a big day in Kitchener, and I want to thank my friend Minister Milloy for his leadership on this.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Yesterday, I introduced the Saving Apprentices' Jobs Act. The bill will save over 85,000 apprentices' jobs because of a deadline of April 8 that requires apprentices to join the College of Trades, and you may note that right now only approximately 10,000 of 95,000 apprentices have actually joined the college. That leaves only four weeks for the remainder to join or to lose their jobs, according to the regulation.

As well, the bill also allows 4,300 journeyman candidates who have not written their CFQ to continue working without an expiry date. This bill will be debated on April 3. And I'm asking you, Minister, if you can't intervene between now and April 3, if you will support this bill and even at second and third reading—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

The Minister of Training, College and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member raises an important challenge for the College of Trades that I know that Mr. Tsubouchi and Mr. Johnson are working very hard on. In fact, I met with them on this very issue about a week or so ago. They have given a year of grace period for apprentices to join the college. They're looking at this potential deadline in April as a challenge for them as well, as they work towards getting more and more apprentices to join. I guess the challenge I have is: Why would the member come forward with a piece of legislation? All he has to do is pick up the phone and contact David Tsubouchi, somebody whom I think he knows

very well, somebody whom this side of the House has a lot of respect for. Instead, the member decides that, instead of picking up the phone and talking to Mr. Tsubouchi about some suggestions he may have, he decides to try to hatchet Mr. Tsubouchi by putting forward provocative legislation in this Legislature. That's not a good way to deal with this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you for that. I guess that was an answer.

Minister, on this side of the House, we believe in creating one million jobs, not driving away jobs with bureaucracies like the College of Trades. I'm not sure why you don't take this more seriously. I shouldn't be having to call David Tsubouchi. That's your job, to figure that out.

I have a letter dated February 21 to apprenticeship sponsors from your five directors—from your staff, Minister. It clearly states, "If your apprentices fail to renew their membership by April 8, 2014, their college membership will expire, and their registered training agreement will be cancelled. This means you will no longer be able to train them as apprentices and they will not be able to work in the compulsory aspect of their trade."

Minister, there are at least 85,000 apprentices counting on you, and they have not joined the Ontario College of Trades. Are you going to allow this to happen, or will you join with me and the PC caucus and support this bill—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This is another in a long line of attempts from the member opposite to try to usurp the power of the College of Trades and bring it back to Queen's Park, where these decisions could be made in smoky backrooms in the Albany Club. We're not going there. We have faith in Mr. David Tsubouchi, a former cabinet minister in this Legislature, in the very cabinet that his leader served in. We have faith in Mr. Ron Johnson, a former PC MPP from this Legislature. We know that the College of Trades is facing challenges from time to time, and this is one of them. I have faith in those two gentlemen. Unlike the member opposite, who, time and time again, tries to do a hatchet job on the hard work that those gentlemen are doing, I have faith in them that they will resolve this challenge, as they have every other challenge that that member has brought forward to this Legislature. Time to put the fear-mongering away and support—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

New question. Nice and easy.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. During the TO2015 quarterly report media conference, the TO2015 CEO said that hugely erroneous es-

timates for the games were in the security bid book. However, as he was not a part of the process, he did not know what the elements were in determining the cost to be \$113 million. Are we to believe that the new CEO was not briefed by the new chair of the board, who was hand-picked by the former Premier to lead the Toronto 2015 bid?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm very confident in the new CEO of Toronto 2015 and the work that he's doing. He has actually been very familiar with the budget of 2015. He has been actively involved with the ministry of community and security, looking at ways that we're going to protect the interest of the public. They are doing what is necessary to do just that. I'm very appreciative of the work being done by our ministry, in association with 2015 and their team as well.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: We've seen how completely out of touch the current security costs are with what was in the bid book. Many more questions are now raised about the other costs in total. With 60 months to go, we haven't signed a security contract. The private security contracts have not been signed. If we haven't signed them now, how much higher will the cost be when you actually get to it?

The Vancouver-based security firm that's in the running worked on the G20 and was one of the companies that didn't even have an Ontario licence. It has paid its fine, but do you think it's appropriate, Mr. Speaker, that a company that has blatantly disrespected the laws of this province and of this country is in the running?

Will the Acting Premier commit right now to directing TO2015 to do a complete comparison between the actual costs and the bid book to determine how far off we really are?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Minister of Correctional Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member for his question. Mr. Speaker, \$113 million was based on our best assessment of security needs four years ago. Since 2009, much has changed. Games plans have progressed; so have security plans also. Our current estimated cost is \$239 million.

This whole process is headed by the Ontario Provincial Police. There are experts there. They have taken advice from other communities across the world where they have hosted such an event.

Right now the security threat is very low. If the security threat is raised, we will react accordingly. We are not going to gamble with the security of our athletes, our coaches and our visitors in Ontario.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I had the honour and privilege of attending last week's Rural Ontario Muni-

pal Association and Good Roads combined conference, along with our Premier and many ministers in this House. I can tell you that, as a former mayor, I'm well aware of and respect the important role that our municipal leaders and our municipalities play in delivering the invaluable services across this province.

Speaker, our government's partnership with municipalities is strong, but municipalities are still concerned about what they can expect as to what supports will be provided by the government to strengthen their communities. As we continue to work together in improving the lives of all Ontarians, Speaker, through you, I'd like to ask the minister if she could update this House as to how we are providing ongoing support to our municipal partners.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member for the question. As a former municipal councillor myself, I know how important our municipal governments are. That's why I was proud that many members of our government and the opposition, indeed, came out and attended the ROMA/OGRA conference here in Toronto. I was able to meet with 25 municipalities from across Ontario to discuss their pressing needs. Though we listened to their concerns regarding land use planning, property assessment and the provincial land tax, we heard their support for the almost \$3.2 billion our government has provided in municipal uploads since 2013 alone.

I heard their concerns following the PC leader's address. They are concerned that this important investment in Ontario may not continue should they become elected. Elected officials worry that a Tory government will bring back the forced amalgamations and the \$3 billion in downloading that occurred the last time the opposition was in power. Unlike the party opposite, our government believes that a collaborative approach creates a stronger, more productive and respectful relationship with municipalities, and that's what—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to thank the minister for the answer. It's good to know that our government will continue to work with our municipalities on issues that are of concern to them.

However, Speaker, while at the conference, the minister gave a keynote address, and she mentioned the provincial policy statement. I know that land use planning isn't the most exciting, most attention-grabbing topic, but the provincial policy statement guides direction on how land use planning provides future housing and economic and agricultural development while protecting our environmental heritage, such as the greenbelt.

Rural and northern municipalities worry the changes to the provincial policy statement will not recognize the unique challenges that these municipalities face. I'm asking, through you, Speaker: Can the minister explain to the House what she has done to ensure that this important guide to development takes these municipal concerns into account?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I would argue that good land use planning is exciting, because it ensures the long-term

economic prosperity of Ontarians. Certainly in northern Ontario that's true, as well as in southern Ontario.

We've listened very carefully to the concerns of northern and rural Ontarians. My ministry undertook extensive consultation with municipalities across the province, as well as community groups and aboriginal communities. We gave careful consideration to suggestions from northern and rural stakeholder work groups to ensure that the provincial policy statement takes into consideration the distinct and specific needs of these communities.

Our government's new provincial policy statement is exciting. It includes rural policies that will help them unlock new economic opportunities, and these opportunities will allow a greater range of economic uses for farms for tourism and home-based businesses, which will help Ontario attract new businesses and grow already existing ones.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Last week at the ROMA/OGRA conference, Minister, you faced criticism from municipalities for your government's total disregard for rural Ontario, as demonstrated by your failed green energy scheme. And you know what, Speaker? The NDP can't get a free pass on this either, because they talk out of both sides of their mouth, but the fact is, they are supporting —

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Some time ago, that has been deemed to be unparliamentary. I'll ask you to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I withdraw.

Minister, back to you. While you like to focus on how you will do things differently on a go-forward basis just to confuse people, right now, today, we have a major issue that can no longer be ignored, and that is your continual approval of applications that have been in the queue, as well as the extension of deadlines for projects facing ERT appeals. You're choosing to ignore missed deadlines that could serve as off-ramps.

Minister, when we don't need the energy and people can't afford the electricity, why isn't your government choosing to take opportunities —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you. Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 255 contracts which have been awarded for renewable projects which are still not completed. The issue has been raised consistently in this House by the opposition.

In the first instance, the leader of the third party said that he would cancel those contracts. Then he said he would not cancel those contracts. Then, at the International Plowing Match, he intimated that he would cancel those contracts. Now he's really put it in writing. He now has the Million Jobs Act, and in the Million Jobs Act they are assigning to the Minister of Energy the right to cancel these contracts, contracts that represent \$20 bil-

lion in energy. They are going to expose the province to \$20 billion in liability by that thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Minister, you're spinning more than a turbine. This government proclaims that it is honest and transparent, but the fact is that communities and concerned citizens are no longer able to find out if a proposed wind project has gone past its commercial operating date, therefore violating the terms of its FIT contract. To be specific, this information is no longer on the OPA site. It has been removed on purpose.

Minister, when will your government finally be honest and transparent and tell the people of Ontario exactly what is going on with your fiasco?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member spins more than a wind turbine.

We have indicated that we're changing the procurement of large renewable moving forward. We're going to have the Ontario Power Authority do a request for proposals. There will absolutely need to be an agreement with the municipality to move forward with new projects.

The reality is, since the first award of contracts —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron-Bruce asked the question. You will listen.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —under the FIT program for wind, large wind and large solar, there has been an actual moratorium on wind, because we have not issued more wind projects. We have wind projects that are already under contract. We're going to respect those contracts. New contracts for wind will require a new process that will engage the —

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ELGIN-MIDDLESEX DETENTION CENTRE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. As the minister knows, today, three employees at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre were charged in relation to the death of an inmate in October 2013. For years, the ministry has known about the problems at EMDC, including severe overcrowding, understaffing and design flaws that prevent direct supervision. Why is this government failing the inmates, their families and the correctional officers at EMDC by not addressing the understaffing, overcrowding and design flaws at the facility?

1130

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member for her question. Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the charge. As she knows, it would be inappropriate for me to comment given the ongoing criminal proceeding as well as the ministry's own internal investigation. I do want to offer, though, my condolences to the family and friends of the deceased.

I know that the ministry takes its mandate very seriously to ensure the well-being and health of all those in

our custody. This government believes that everyone in our custody should be treated with respect and held in humane and safe conditions.

Despite best efforts, violence is a reality for correctional facilities everywhere. On a daily basis, correctional staff deal with and manage the risk of inmate violence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Minister, as far as I'm aware, there have been frequent lockdowns at EMDC but no changes that will stop a situation like the murder of Adam Kargus from happening again. Minister, for two years now, we've been calling on this government to address the issues at EMDC. A class-action lawsuit has been filed highlighting the concerns. What exactly is the minister planning to do so that overcrowding at EMDC does not lead to another death?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, as I said, the health and safety of our staff and inmates are a top priority. As you know, I have introduced a 12-point plan to address concerns at EMDC. I have met with the union on two occasions. We have done quite a lot of progress. We have installed over 300 security cameras. We have a new control model. We have hired 11 additional staff as correctional officer positions, and we have hired three surgeons and one additional mental health nurse. We now have 24-hour nursing that has been established, resulting in seven additional nurses. We now have an advisory board of volunteer community members. Mr. Speaker, I will continue to work with the management and the union to improve health and safety in EMDC.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, l'honorable Signor Mario Sergio.

Speaker, I believe that my own constituents in the great riding of Etobicoke North are pleased by a number of the very significant investments our government has made, many of which, as you'll appreciate, are historic.

It's important to my residents that our government continues to invest in people, infrastructure and that it support a dynamic and innovative business climate. I'm pleased, therefore, that the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat has created Ontario's first grant dedicated solely to seniors.

Can the minister please inform this chamber: How does the Ontario government continue to work with seniors to establish these valuable programs?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Je voudrais remercier le député d'Etobicoke-Nord pour une très bonne question sur nos personnes âgées.

Speaker, I would like to really thank the member because I know he's got the seniors in Etobicoke North in his heart, and the seniors are the reason why we're here today.

I was delighted, indeed, to announce this very important grant program. The Seniors Community Grant Program is just one of the many examples and initiatives that

our government has introduced to help our seniors to remain engaged, to stay within their community and to stay active and live as long as possible.

Speaker, to establish one of these programs requires a lot of hard work and co-operation from various stakeholders, seniors' organizations, individual groups and the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat. I have to say, Speaker, that on Monday I have met with the Ontario seniors' liaison committee, that are working very hard in advising the province on how to continue to serve our seniors better.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Minister, for your dedication.

Remarks in Italian.

I know, Speaker, that constituents in my riding of Etobicoke North appreciate the fact that the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat provides a forum for our seniors to voice and discuss important issues that affect them every day.

During the many events that I attend in my own riding, I often get the chance to stop and speak with seniors. A common topic that we discuss is how important it is to support seniors in maintaining an independent lifestyle. As a physician, I can tell you that if we are able to empower our seniors to live at home, independently active and mobile, that's of great benefit.

Speaker, can the minister please inform this House about some of the other initiatives that have been created in collaboration with various seniors' groups in Ontario?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Again I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North. Molte grazie.

I have to really tell you, it's very comforting and it's very appreciated that we are speaking on behalf of our seniors. We can learn a lot more from our seniors indeed. That is why, in January, along with various seniors' groups, I was very happy to celebrate the one-year anniversary of Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors. We constantly search for new ways and innovative solutions. That is why I want all Ontarians to know how we continue to work closely with our seniors to further enhance and build on our achievements, achievements such as age-friendly communities, the Finding Your Way wandering prevention program, the elderly persons' centre, the elder abuse legislation, strong protection for retirement home residents, fire protection, and much more.

Yes, indeed, Speaker: We are the reason why we are working so hard for our seniors. They are our reason.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, recently a Waterloo firefighter who was diagnosed with a presumptive cancer almost lost his full-time benefits just because he volunteered in another community.

In response to this news, two double-hatters just this week handed in their resignation at the Wellesley Fire Department. If action isn't taken soon, many more resignations will likely follow at fire halls across the region. In fact, the local fire association is now advising its mem-

bers not to volunteer in Wilmot, Wellesley and Woolwich.

Minister, this is a major public safety issue. What steps will you take to keep our rural communities safe across this province of Ontario?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for the question. We have had the opportunity to speak on this particular issue. Obviously, I cannot comment on the specifics of this issue, but I have undertaken, Speaker, to the member opposite to look into broadly what rules are applied from the WSIB when it comes to the treatment of firefighters who may be full-time, part-time or volunteer.

We know that firefighters are vital to keeping our communities safe. When there's a fire, as we all are rushing out, they're the ones who rush in. Every day, they risk their lives to protect our lives, and that is why our government has made it easier for full-time, part-time and volunteer firefighters and the fire investigators, those who suffer fire-related illnesses, to qualify for workplace insurance benefits. As you know, currently eight types of cancer and heart-related injuries suffered by firefighters are presumed to be work-related unless proven otherwise.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: The last thing a firefighter suffering from cancer should have to deal with is uncertainty regarding workplace compensation, but that's exactly what's happening now because of a serious gap in the provincial legislation. There are no guidelines in the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act for double-hatters.

To make up for this deficiency, the WSIB has stated that a double-hatter's last employer should be responsible for compensation. The trouble with this rule is that the double-hatters could lose their full-time benefits just because they last fought a fire as a volunteer in a different community.

Minister, will you address this legal gap to ensure that full-time firefighters suffering from cancer get the benefits they deserve?

Interjections.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I think all members in the House will agree that when we're talking about protecting the lives of our firefighters, we will not for a single second assume or presume or argue that that's a partisan issue. It's not. That's why I have undertaken, to the member opposite, that I look forward to working with him in identifying what the problem is and, if there is one, then working on creating the solutions around it. That's my word, and I'm very pleased to see that.

But, Speaker, we're also very proud in this House. I thank all of the members who have spoken on making sure that firefighters, when it comes to extending presumptive conditions—I'm very proud of the private member's bill that the member from Vaughan has tabled in adding an additional six more cancers to that pre-

sumptive list, and we're working very closely with firefighters to find ways to make that happen as well.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. For months, physicians, hospital staff, patients and community activists have been urging this government to prioritize patient care above all else in discussions to merge hospital sites in Scarborough and Durham.

Unfortunately, the government has chosen to ignore these requests. This week, physicians are saying the following: "A successful long-term merger becomes that much more difficult if patient services are not protected in the short term."

Can the minister explain how patient care is going to be protected while this merger is being considered?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have had several meetings with members from the Scarborough area on this very issue. I am pleased to know that there is progress being made on developing plans to look at this merger.

I can tell you there's been a lot of work done to make sure people—the community and medical staff and others—understand the implications of a merger. I'm very pleased to know that increasingly there is community support for this kind of change, and I assure the member opposite that this is all about improving care for patients. This is all about providing better care closer to home for the people of Scarborough.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Already, the planning for this merger makes reference to cuts to patient services. Physicians are telling you that quality of care is threatened: This merger represents "a betrayal of our commitments to our patients and the communities we serve, and puts at risk the programs that deliver patient care."

I ask the minister, again: Will she commit to preserving patient care at the highest priority while this merger is being considered?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I can absolutely assure the member opposite that this is all about improving patient care, full stop, period.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Attorney General. I am pleased to hear that just last week the settlements were approved by Justice Conway for the Rideau Regional Centre and the Southwestern Regional Centre class actions. The settlements will provide access to compensation for harm that may have been suffered by former residents of Southwestern Regional Centre and Rideau Regional Centre between 1963 and 2009.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to hear that the government has taken steps to commemorate former residents of these two centres and their experiences.

Can the Attorney General please provide this House with more details about the settlements and the com-

memorative aspects for the former residents of South-western Regional Centre and Rideau Regional Centre?

Hon. John Gerretsen: When the Huronia settlement was made about three or four months ago, both the Minister of Community and Social Services and I instructed our respective staffs in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Comsoc to work out the other two settlements as quickly as possible, and they've done that, Speaker. Although we can't change the past and the way in which some of these people were being treated at these various institutions, we will continue to do everything as a government to make sure that people, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, are respected with compassion, dignity and respect.

I'm very pleased to say that these cases have been settled now. A retired Supreme Court of Canada justice will be making the final determinations with respect to some of the more unusual cases that have developed in these situations.

The documents that were produced during the lawsuit will be preserved in the Archives of Ontario. Former residents, as I mentioned before, who wish to obtain their personal case files can do so by contacting the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Speaker, what happened there shouldn't have happened. We hope that the people who were involved can now find some dignity and respect back in their lives from these settlements.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct what I've said. My colleague told me that I said that we have hired three surgeons in EMDC. It's three sergeants. I apologize for my accent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is a point of order, and all members know they're allowed to correct their own record.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1146 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to introduce Smokey Thomas, who is the president of the union. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. Any other introductions of guests?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to welcome Smokey Thomas, the president of OPSEU, who is here along with a few others; I don't know their names. At least, it looks like Smokey.

Interjection: That's Smokey.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My eyes are failing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If I stretch long enough, they'll send a note.

Last call for introductions.

It is now time for members' statements.

Miss Monique Taylor: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: I've had my invisible cloak on all day today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My friend, I would never miss you.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're welcome. The member from Hamilton Mountain with introductions.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to welcome Mr. Smokey Thomas, Doug Evetts, Patti Markland, Erin Rice and Lyndsey Chapman, who are here for the tabling of the interim report for the developmental services select committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As I pointed out, somebody got the note.

It is now time for a last call for introductions—three times.

All right, it's now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MUNICIPALITIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Last week, I had the pleasure of hosting 13 out of 14 municipalities from my riding of Huron–Bruce right here for a breakfast at Queen's Park. The municipalities were represented by their mayors, CAOs, administrative clerk-treasurers and councillors, who all participated in a lively discussion about the many issues that are currently facing municipalities throughout the riding. It was particularly lively, considering how early in the morning it was.

First of all, I would like to thank everyone from Huron–Bruce who took the time to attend the breakfast. I know that you took time out of a very busy week at the ROMA/OGRA conference to attend, and I sincerely appreciate that.

I would also like to thank my colleagues the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, the member from Nipissing and the member from Leeds–Grenville, here to my right, for, first of all, the early get-up in the morning and for your frank and direct discussion. I know that the folks from my riding really appreciate the opportunity to have open dialogue with people who are making a difference.

We touched on many issues that are being faced by municipalities in my riding, including the pros and cons of the OPP funding formula and the many questions that surround it; managing the recent decreases in OMPPF funding; and the implications of the Great Lakes Protection Act, among others.

Although not everyone agreed on how best to tackle each issue, the honest and respectful discussion was certainly beneficial for everyone involved. It was a fantastic experience, and it truly emphasized the importance of dialogue between all levels of government.

ACCIDENT BENEFITS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Ontario government quietly changed a law in December 2013—just this past December—surrounding car insurance, and specifically concerning no-fault attendant benefits—this was effective February 1, 2014—without any public consultation.

What this means is that it restricts the amount of attendant benefits that can be claimed by family members who are caring for someone who has been injured in an automobile accident.

To make some further clarifications, this attendant care benefit is only available to the most vulnerable people in our society: those who are catastrophically injured. To change a benefit that would restrict coverage or restrict the ability for attendant care for some of the most vulnerable people in our society is something absolutely mean-spirited.

What's worse is that though this law is not scheduled to be retroactive, many insurers are asking that this change be scheduled to be retroactive so that it should apply prior to February 1.

This would mean that people who have already left their jobs, who are already caring for their loved ones, would no longer have the protection or the compensation that they would have been entitled to.

This is absolutely unacceptable. This could result in further claims and disputes. It's quite ironic, because the government has just introduced a bill which seeks to speed up the dispute resolution system but has actually created another complex problem in the system.

I call on the government to stop going after the most vulnerable people in our society and cancel this mean regulatory change.

PARLEMENT JEUNESSE FRANCOPHONE

M. Grant Crack: Monsieur le Président, collègues et amis, il me fait un grand plaisir et un très grand honneur de souhaiter la bienvenue à tous les participants et toutes les participantes au huitième Parlement jeunesse à l'Assemblée législative. Ils sont ici à Queen's Park cette semaine pour approfondir leurs connaissances du gouvernement et pour participer à une simulation parlementaire tenue uniquement en français.

J'aimerais également saluer tout spécialement les étudiants et les étudiantes de ma circonscription de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. Ils sont Étienne Camirand, Antoine Robitaille, Marie-Ève Chartrand, Zachary Levert, Zoé Lavergne, Marielle Racette, Jean-Philippe Héroux, Andréanne Marcotte, Marie-Pierre Héroux et Francesco Caruso.

J'inviterais tous mes collègues à se joindre à nous cet après-midi à 17 h à l'escalier principal pour une prise de photo avec tout le groupe, et ensuite pour une célébration dans la pièce 247. Au plaisir de vous voir là.

Merci et bonjour aux étudiants et étudiantes.

BOB LANGSTAFF

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Today, it's my honour to rise to pay tribute to a true public servant and community leader: former warden of Lambton county Bob Langstaff. Bob died at his home in Dresden on February 22. He was 72.

Of course, many knew that Bob was Lambton county's warden in 1987 and also carried the PC banner for the former Lambton riding in the 1990 Ontario general election.

Bob was a long-time member of the Dawn township council, serving as councillor and reeve from 1977 until 1991. It was while serving as reeve that Bob played a key role in the creation and deployment of the Dawn township volunteer fire department. In fact, Bob was a member of the volunteer force until only recently, when he officially retired.

Bob was a key member of the committee when Petrolia hosted the International Plowing Match and Farm Machinery Show in September 1991. We also know that proceeds from that event were placed into a trust fund for educational scholarships—these scholarships are still being awarded today—and that Bob was a trustee on the scholarship committee until he passed.

Fittingly, Bob was recognized for his long-time public service and was awarded a Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal last year.

Sadly, Bob died in Dresden, as I said, this past weekend. He was married to his wife, Jennifer, and had two children and two grandchildren. His memorial service was held this past weekend, and I know that MPP Bob Bailey was pleased to attend and speak at that occasion. I think it's appropriate that we recognize his life and service here this afternoon.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I rise to address the matter of the vulnerability of Ontario's families to extreme weather events. As you are well aware, this past December, we saw an ice storm hit Ontario that knocked out power for large numbers of people for a week, two weeks and somewhat more.

This was a situation where seniors and the disabled were stranded on the 10th, 15th, 20th floors and above of high-rise buildings, and, frankly, a situation that this government has been warned about by expert panels that it itself has appointed: warned about by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario specifically about ice storms; and warned by environmental organizations about the impact of extreme weather on our electricity system.

When an announcement was made the other day about assistance for those who had been hit by the ice storm, there was no announcement of any assessment of the electricity system to make sure that we aren't vulnerable in the same way in the future.

1510

Speaker, extreme weather is becoming more and more a part of our everyday lives. Ontario has had three 100-year storm events since the beginning of the 21st century. We are going to see a lot more. It is time for this government to do the assessment of the vulnerabilities of the energy system, both gas and electric, so that people aren't stranded, freezing in the cold, for another storm in another month.

STRONG GIRLS STRONG WOMEN SYMPOSIUM

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Today I would like to speak about a program that has been spearheaded by an inspirational community leader from my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood.

In November of 2012, Ann Buller, the president of Centennial College, started the Strong Girls Strong Women program. Today, over 200 girls from the Scarborough area spent the day at Centennial College Progress campus, participating in education and career training.

The purpose of this program was to empower young girls to become strong women. The program's first symposium was held in March of 2013. I had the honour of attending their second symposium, held earlier this afternoon at the Progress campus. The symposiums attempt to expose young girls to unique career opportunities and introduce them to strong female role models in order to inspire them to choose education and career paths they may never consider before: an artist, a designer, a mechanic, a paramedic, a chemist or a chef. Programs like Strong Girls Strong Women and champions for the betterment of the condition of girls and women, like Ann Buller, are still needed today.

We have entered International Women's Week, and this Saturday we will celebrate International Women's Day. This year's theme is "Inspiring Change," which is exactly what so many of our community leaders like Ann are doing.

Even here in Ontario, despite the inroads that our government has made in the area of women's rights and the equality of women and men, there is still so much further to go. Programs like Strong Girls Strong Women are helping inspire the next generation of women to reach their full potential. As a young girl said today, they are smart and strong.

M. SULLIVAN AND SON LTD.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Last Friday I had the opportunity to participate in a wonderful event in Arnprior: the launching of a book by Brian Hanington entitled *A Hundred Years on a Handshake*. It is the lively history of M. Sullivan and Son Ltd.

Maurice Sullivan, a reputable carpenter, decided that the future would be much brighter if he became a building contractor. The first contract for this staunch Roman Catholic was to build St. Thomas Anglican Church in Woodlawn in 1914. How ironic is that?

Since then, his heirs and over 30,000 employees have made this company one of the most respected in Canada. The Sullivan reputation for quality is legend. Their fingerprints dot the land across Renfrew county and indeed much of eastern Canada.

What is even more legendary, however, is their business philosophy. When you work for the Sullivans, you join the family. One such employee, Gibby Tourangeau, began working with the Sullivans when he was 18. He's still there today, part-time, some 72 years later. My uncle John worked for the Sullivans from 1948 till his retirement in 1998 at the age of 83.

The Sullivan I knew best is Tommy. "Iconic" is hardly a sufficient way to describe this man, not just as a businessman but also as a mayor of the town. Sadly, Tommy left us two years ago in January, but I know that he would be pleased with this project. His impact on the community will never be forgotten.

Quality, toughness and fairness: These are the three values to which the Sullivans hold true. I urge everyone to get the book. I, like you, am looking forward to the next 100 years.

OAKVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise today to celebrate the 65th anniversary of a very special institution in Oakville. In 1949, the business community of the town of Oakville came together and formed the Oakville Chamber of Commerce for the betterment of the town and the local economy. The chamber, as we all know, is non-partisan. It's a not-for-profit business association that advocates for its member businesses, of which, in Oakville, there are over 1,100 members employing over 33,000 Ontarians.

Through their mentorship opportunities, networking events and educational programs, Oakville entrepreneurs now have the support they need to get their businesses flourishing. Recently, the chamber hosted Oakville resident Dr. Ian Dawe, physician-in-chief of the Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences and associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Toronto, for a seminar of mental wellness in the workplace. Oakville has become accustomed to seeing its great chamber of commerce helping in the community where it can. Shedding light on mental illness is just another fine example. Led by president John Sawyer and an incredible staff, it will soon host the awards for business excellence in Oakville.

To the Oakville Chamber of Commerce, I want to say I wish you a very happy 65th. I wish you and your members many more years of success in the community and abroad. Thanks for all you do on a daily basis for the business community.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise on behalf of the growing number of people in Leeds—Grenville whose lives have been shattered by Lyme disease.

Like many MPPs, I have stood in this place to introduce petitions on behalf of the people I represent, pleading to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to do better for patients with Lyme disease—patients like Karen Brown.

Karen was bitten by a tick just before Thanksgiving last year at her home in Mallorytown. Her life hasn't been the same since. As she wrote to me, "This is no longer me living my retirement dreams but living a very restricted lifestyle without knowing any relief from the pain."

Meanwhile, the response from Ontario's health care system is one that too many Lyme disease patients have experienced. Karen had two tests for Lyme come back negative because OHIP won't cover the appropriate test to diagnose her disease. Instead of treatment to make her better, she is sent for more tests while her health deteriorates as Lyme tightens its grip.

Our health care system is wasting money and, worse, the precious time Karen and other Lyme patients have to get started on treatment.

Speaker, I've heard the minister repeat her mantra, "the right care, at the right time, at the right place," too many times to count. My message to the minister today is that her words ring hollow for Lyme patients like Karen Brown.

It's time the Ministry of Health moves beyond empty words and takes real action to ensure that those suffering from Lyme disease are diagnosed and treated before more lives are destroyed.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

SELECT COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I beg leave to present the interim report of the Select Committee on Developmental Services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mrs. Albanese presents the committee's report.

Report presented.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I welcome the opportunity to say a few words. This has been a humbling experience thus far. Travelling across Ontario, the select committee has given us members the opportunity to meet so many people with intellectual disabilities or dual diagnoses—so many families, organizations, people who work in the sector and others who are passionate about people with disabilities.

I would like to commend each member of the committee for working together in a non-partisan way to address the urgent need for a comprehensive strategy to address the needs of the most vulnerable in our society. We look forward to continuing to work together to find

meaningful solutions to improve their lives, providing the supports that they need and deserve.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

YMCA OF HAMILTON/BURLINGTON/BRANTFORD ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2014

Mr. Delaney moved first reading of the following bill: Bill Pr28, An Act respecting YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I move that the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to meet on Tuesday, March 11, and Wednesday, March 12, between 9 a.m. and noon and 1 to 5 p.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to meet on Tuesday, March 11, and Wednesday, March 12, between 9 a.m. and noon and 1 to 5 p.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. Do we agree? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1521 to 1551.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would the members take their seats, please.

All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Milloy, John
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Gélinas, France	Murray, Glen R.
Bisson, Gilles	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Campbell, Sarah	Hatfield, Percy	Oraziotti, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Hoskins, Eric	Piruzza, Teresa
Chan, Michael	Hunter, Miltzie	Prue, Michael
Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Kwinter, Monte	Sattler, Peggy
Damerla, Dipika	Leal, Jeff	Schein, Jonah
Del Duca, Steven	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario

Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy

Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine

Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanhof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.

I agree with this petition and affix my name, and I'll give it to page Owen.

TAXATION

Ms. Laurie Scott: “Stop the Gas Tax Increase.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government is considering a 10-cents-per-litre increase on the provincial gas tax to fund mass transit; and

“Whereas the government’s alternative is to raise the gas tax five cents per litre and increase the harmonized sales tax by 0.5%; and

“Whereas many people in rural Ontario need to drive to get to and from work or school or to get groceries and other essentials and do not have the option of taking mass transit; and

“Whereas a 10-cents-per-litre increase of the gas tax places an unaffordable financial burden on many families; and

“Whereas the increase in the gas tax would cost the average Ontario household \$260 a year; and

“Whereas the government should cut waste to fund mass transit before taxing Ontarians;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario reduce waste and fund mass transit through methods that do not place an unnecessary financial burden on the people of Ontario, especially those who must drive to and from work or school.”

I agree, and I sign my signature and hand it to page Sarah.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

“Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

“Whereas progressive record keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry, and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

“Whereas there is more to full exploitation of technology than having email;

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

“Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Clark, Steve
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Holyday, Douglas C.
Hudak, Tim

Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm

Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Yakubski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 57; the nays are 27.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn’s, Alzheimer’s, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of its professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal devices, maximize the many technology offerings and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario ...

"In agreement whereof, we affix our signatures."

I agree with this petition and send to you via page Alessia.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act protects tenants in dwellings and long-term-care homes from sudden and unfair increases to their rent; and

"Whereas ancillary costs such as the provision of meals and other services in a long-term-care facility are not subject to the jurisdiction of said act; and

"Whereas there have been episodes of repeated, large and unjustified increases to the stated costs of meal provision in long-term-care facilities in Cornwall and area; and

"Whereas residents do not have a say in the procurement and administration of meals and other services provided by the facility, nor can they opt out of such services when notified of an increase in charges, being thus committed to a 'take it or leave it' choice;

1600

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) To instruct the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to enact regulations ensuring fairness, protection and choice for residents of long-term-care facilities that provide any other necessary service such as, but not limited to, meals and personal assistance at extra cost to their residents;

"(2) To instruct the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to undertake a comprehensive review of the administration of long-term-care facilities with respect to the provision of services other than lodging that involve an extra charge to residents."

I agree with this petition and will be passing it off to the page.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the youth unemployment rate in Ontario is one of the highest in Canada;

"Whereas tens of thousands of young Ontarians are stuck working internships for no pay or compensation, with few protections in their workplace;

"Whereas many workers and employers do not know their rights or responsibilities under the Employment Standards Act;

"Whereas many young workers are reluctant to speak out about their working conditions out of fear of being blacklisted by employers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario adopt Bill 170, the Greater Protection for Interns and Vulnerable Workers Act to give unpaid interns greater protection under the law, introduce greater oversight of the internship system, collect data on the prevalence of unpaid internships, establish an anonymous third party complaint system, and require an intern Bill of Rights poster to be placed in every workplace."

Speaker, I agree with this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to page Jo Jo.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's the right one, Speaker; you got it. Thank you very much. I'm pleased that you chose me over some of those others.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario's newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year; and

"Whereas the Ontario College of Trades has no clear benefit and no accountability as tradespeople already pay for licences and countless other fees to government; and

"Whereas Ontario has struggled for years to attract people to skilled trades and the planned tax grab will kill jobs and drive people out of trades;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

Speaker, I support this petition, affix my signature and send it down with Jaclyn.

AIR QUALITY

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: I knew you were going to choose me, Madam Speaker.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test no longer assesses tailpipe emissions, but instead scans the on-board diagnostics systems of vehicles, which already perform a series of continuous and periodic emissions checks; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails,' which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly" of Ontario "as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I agree with this and will send it to the table with Kiranpreet.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here from some very concerned citizens in my riding. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I agree with this petition and will affix my name to it.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I full-heartedly agree, sign this and give it to page Ibrahim.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, beginning on January 1, 2013, the WSIB was expanded to include groups of employers and principals who had previously been exempt from WSIB and had private insurance; and

"Whereas this new financial burden does nothing to improve worker safety and only drives up the cost of doing business in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119."

I fully support this, will sign it and give it to page Jaclyn.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I totally agree with this petition, and I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Meera.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services' Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

"Whereas the community of Markdale rallied to raise \$13 million on the promise they would get a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner."

I support this fully, will sign it and give it to page Kiranpreet to take to the Clerks' desk.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario health insurance plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease in Ontario and to have everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and success-

ful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

1610

I agree with this, will sign it, and send it to the table with page Jaclyn.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time for petitions has expired. Orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JOBS AND PROSPERITY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'INFRASTRUCTURE AU SERVICE DE L'EMPLOI ET DE LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 25, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013 / Projet de loi 141, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la prospérité.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's absolutely my pleasure to stand today and speak to Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013. The objective of this, as people at home listening and people in the Legislature will know, is to establish mechanisms to encourage principled, evidence-based and strategic long-term infrastructure planning that supports job creation and training opportunities, economic growth and protection of the environment, and to incorporate design excellence into infrastructure planning.

Critics' comments suggest that we will support the principles advanced in the proposed legislation, such as the need for long-term planning for infrastructure; that infrastructure investments should be prioritized based on a specific list of criteria; that we should know the current state of all government-owned infrastructure assets; and that the government should publish, at minimum, a 10-year plan setting out the anticipated infrastructure needs with a strategy to meet those needs. However, this legislation fails to mandate any specific measures that would enable the practical implementation of the proposed principles.

Speaker—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Point of order?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don't mean to be combative, but when we had the floor, it was questions and comments when we left the debate, as I recall. I didn't get to finish, but I'll let the Clerk figure it out.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I did say, "Further debate," and Mr. Fedeli isn't here.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Well, I did ask for further debate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But he got up before we even had a chance—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was the member for Niagara's maiden speech. I should have said that. So if there's a bit of confusion, understand the situation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We have another point of order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Madam Speaker, can we have unanimous consent for the member to proceed?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Now, I would want to explain to you that someone else has the floor. What I can do is ask the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound if he wishes to cede the time at this point and be in the next rotation.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Would we start over with the 20 minutes?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We'd start over, absolutely.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd be pleased to cede so that the honourable member can do his maiden speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would now recognize the member from Niagara, who has the floor.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Madam Speaker and fellow MPPs. And to the people of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Fort Erie and surrounding communities, thank you for trusting me to bring the Niagara voice to Toronto. I want to thank the people of Niagara who went out in the cold and cast a ballot in the recent by-election. I thank the voters who put their faith in me.

I want to thank the NDP stalwarts who kept the NDP riding association functioning over the last couple of decades. This election win could not have happened without them.

I want to thank the many volunteers who donated their time and went out in the cold and knocked on doors in the middle of one of the coldest winters on record.

To the generous donors and to everyone who displayed their support for me by taking a lawn sign, I would not be here without you.

I want to thank my family for their patience, as I wasn't able to spend a lot of time with them during the election. I want to give a huge thank you to my wife, Rita, a principal; to my three children, Tara-Lynn, Chantel and Jacqueline; and to my grandchildren, Prescila, Tanner, Tatum, Charlotte and Parker.

Niagara is my home. It's where I was raised. It's where I raised my kids and it's where I raise my grandchildren, and it's where they live. The reason why I ran as an MPP for the riding of Niagara Falls was my concern for their future. I was concerned about where the province was going and where the Niagara region was going as people face the highest unemployment rate in the province. What was most disturbing was the high unemployment rate among young people.

I have dedicated my public life to helping improve the futures of families in Niagara by defending and creating jobs throughout Niagara. As president of Unifor Local 199, I have worked with the largest corporations in the world to secure and create jobs. Business leaders know they can work with me. We bargained in a number of sectors including automotive, with General Motors, and health care, aerospace, parts manufacturers, small business and banking.

I was the United Way campaign chair for two years, where we successfully raised \$6 million for local programs in Niagara. And not to give away my age, but I have had this conversation with some of my fellow MPPs: I also play goalie in our local old-timers' hockey league.

Too many young people have to leave Niagara to look for work elsewhere. Families in our ridings don't want to see their 25-year-old kids living in their basements. They want them to get a job, start on their own and raise their own families in their own communities in Niagara. That has to change by making sure we create local jobs in Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake and surrounding communities so young people can build their future in Niagara. It's our obligation collectively to make sure our children and our grandchildren have a future in our communities right here in Ontario. As MPP, I will make sure this government delivers for the people of Fort Erie, Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and surrounding areas.

This government needs to follow through on its promise to build a new Niagara Falls hospital and ensure it gets built by local workers, contractors, engineers and architects.

This government needs to deliver a long-term plan to keep the Fort Erie Race Track open. That includes bringing back the slots to ensure a long-term future for the 1,000 families who depend on the track for their livelihood.

And the Premier owes it to the people of Niagara-on-the-Lake that she met with to make sure the local school, Parliament Oak Public School, not only remains open but takes its place as a model for schools right across Ontario.

I am grateful to the people of Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake and surrounding communities who elected me as their MPP to work with Andrea Horwath and the NDP caucus to put Niagara's priorities at the top of the agenda here at Queen's Park. As MPP, I will fight to make life more affordable for Niagara families by making sure this government lowers hydro rates and reduces auto insurance.

The riding of Niagara Falls has incredible potential, but residents have seen potential squandered by this Liberal government.

When I was in Fort Erie, I went door to door and I talked to many, many people who lost their jobs at the racetrack. I saw that not only the stores were closing down, but entire malls were closed. People in Fort Erie saw 1,000 jobs threatened when the slots were ripped out

of the Fort Erie Race Track—its main source of revenue. Instead of shoring up tourism and creating more jobs in Fort Erie, the provincial tourist office that was used to welcome visitors from the United States was shut down.

It was Andrea Horwath and the NDP that stood shoulder to shoulder with the Fort Erie community to make sure the Fort Erie Race Track stayed open.

1620

Together with Fort Erie families, the mayor, the city council and Jim Thibert, the head of the Fort Erie Race Track, we pressured this government to keep this promise to fund festival racing at the track this year. It took a by-election to get this government to agree to keep the track open for one more year.

People were relieved that their track didn't close down, but the fight is not over. As MPP, I'll make sure this government commits to a long-term plan for the track that includes bringing back the slots, so families don't have to live with constant insecurity about their future.

People in Fort Erie were also very concerned about their health care. People know me, and they know my record when it comes to health care. I've always fought to keep access open to the best-quality health care for people, when they need it, where they need it, no matter where they live in our communities.

When the Liberals closed down the ER in Fort Erie, I stood with the yellow shirts and 5,000 people who stood up to save their local hospital.

When the Liberals cut maternity service in Niagara Falls, I stood with expectant moms. It's one that I've never understood: People go to Niagara Falls, one of the seven wonders of the world, as a tourist destination; they go there for their honeymoons; they go there to make babies; and now in Niagara Falls, we can't even deliver them. It makes absolutely no sense.

When the C. diff outbreak was raging through our hospital, I stood with the patients' families—and their loved ones who had passed away.

It has been an uphill battle to get the government to listen to the needs of the people of Niagara. In Niagara-on-the-Lake, I met with families who were trying to keep Parliament Oak Public School open. The Premier visited Niagara-on-the-Lake, and she spoke to the school community. She met with the parents for almost an hour. She said school boards have a responsibility to listen to the communities. Well, the community, the parents, the Lord Mayor, city council, the chamber of commerce and the government's own accommodation review committee all say the school should stay open. Now it's time for the Premier to listen to local voices. The Premier will not stop hearing from me, as MPP, until she takes action to keep Parliament Oak Public School open for the community she met with in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

In Niagara Falls, this government promised to build a new Niagara Falls hospital. I support the new Niagara Falls hospital 100%. As a Niagara Falls councillor, I voted to make sure that the \$20 million of casino money the city received went towards building the hospital. I

also voted in favour of the location. As an MPP, I'll make sure this government delivers on its promise to the Niagara families, to make sure they get their hospital for their local health care needs, when they need it, where they need it.

Local leaders are concerned that the Wynne Liberal government is ignoring their call for full-day GO train service to Niagara Falls and to provide much-needed stimulus for the local economy. Regional leaders across Niagara are urging this government to extend daily GO train service to Niagara, because they recognize how vital it is to our local economy.

They talk of building more campuses in Niagara Falls. Full-day GO train service is a way to get students to any new university or college campus built in the city, revitalizing our downtown, and we all understand how important it is to have vibrant downtowns.

Daily GO train service will also bring tourists, who would travel from Toronto and other communities to get to Niagara Falls. As MPP, I will make sure this government takes action by committing to a timeline to bring daily GO train service to Niagara Falls.

In Niagara Falls, local leaders are also concerned that this government is jeopardizing jobs and revenue at the Niagara Falls casino, because these casinos seem to be an afterthought of the Wynne Liberal government as they continue to push for new casinos across Ontario. As MPP, I'll make sure this government doesn't exclude the Niagara Falls casinos in any plans.

Jobs: When I was campaigning, I knocked on thousands of doors. People told me across the riding that their main concern was jobs, jobs to maintain their families, jobs for their children and their grandchildren, so that at 25 they don't have to live in their basements and they can start an independent family, an independent life and raise their own families in our communities.

As an MPP and NDP advocate for jobs, I'll make sure more jobs are created for those who need work in Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Fort Erie and the surrounding communities. There are many opportunities to shore up our local economy and create much-needed jobs so people can stay in Niagara and raise their family.

I can give you an example of that. SpencerARL, the first manufacturer that came into Niagara in 20 years, started with 11 employees. They met with our mayor, they met with our city councillor and they met with the union. They started with 11 people, and after a year and a half, they're up to 280 employees. In meeting with those employers, they told me they could even do more, they could hire more employees, because the corporate tax cut wasn't working for them but the NDP tax credit would. It would help them hire more people, invest in training and invest in new machinery.

In Fort Erie, today, this government can easily create 1,000 permanent jobs by bringing back the slots to the Fort Erie Race Track. This government needs to show the 1,000 families that depend on the track for their jobs a long-term plan and commitment to keep the racetrack open. Fort Erie families shouldn't have to keep living

with constant insecurity about what's going to happen next year. Bring back the slots to keep the Fort Erie Race Track open permanently. There will also be hundreds more jobs at the new speedway. This would send a clear message across the province that Fort Erie is open for business.

The new Niagara Falls hospital is also an opportunity to create new local jobs. This government needs to include provisions in the construction of the hospital to hire local workers, local contractors, local engineers and local architects. This government should also ensure that at every possible opportunity, the construction of the new hospital buys local products to stimulate the local economy. With the highest unemployment rate, this is a way to put people back to work in Niagara, including our young people. That's the way to respect public dollars and maximize the benefits for families in Niagara who need jobs.

New Democrats want to give a tax credit for every new job created. For small businesses and larger companies, this would give them the incentive to hire more people and expand their businesses.

Tourism: Over the course of the campaign, NDP leader Andrea Horwath and myself met with tourist operators, including hotel owners, small businesses and restaurant owners, to talk about how we can get people back to work and expand their businesses. They were in favour of the NDP tax credit to create more jobs and said this would help them build their businesses.

We also met with training companies who said that corporate tax cuts were not benefitting them. They were very supportive of the NDP planned tax credit to hire more people, more machinery and more training.

Wineries in Niagara-on-the-Lake: During the campaign, we met with a number of local wineries, and they told us clearly that corporate tax breaks were not working for them. After meeting with NDP leader Andrea Horwath and myself, they were excited about the NDP 's job tax credit that would help them hire more people and expand their businesses.

I've already pointed out that people in Niagara are facing very a very high unemployment rate, and while they face job insecurity, families and small businesses in Niagara have to deal with skyrocketing hydro bills that are a direct product of this government's broken hydro promises.

Hydro: What people in Niagara and across the province know is that they can no longer afford to pay current hydro rates let alone more rate increases. People in Niagara, like the rest of the province, are paying the highest hydro rates in the country. We met with family-run businesses, big and small manufacturers, and wineries. They told us that the hydro rates are jeopardizing their businesses.

1630

The NDP leader, Andrea Horwath, and myself met with owners of the local Quiznos in Niagara Falls. They used to have employees, and what happened is, their hydro bill went from \$900 a month to \$1,250. What

happened? They had to let the help go, and they now have to work 12 hours a day to run their local business. They need help. The privatizing of hydro is leading to a 40% increase in hydro rates for families at home as well as small businesses, and more than a 30% increase for industries is projected over the next five years. Just today, I got a call from a homeowner in Niagara Falls who told me that his hydro bill last year was \$300. This year it's over \$500.

This government needs to start making hydro affordable for families and businesses. New Democrats have been telling this government to cut the billion-dollar subsidy to private power companies to sell discount electricity across the border, and to pass the savings on to families. It's the right thing to do and it's the fair thing to do. As we sell it to the Americans, what they are doing is subsidizing it in the States to manufacturers who then take away our jobs in Ontario. It makes absolutely no sense that that's happening.

We need to cut the enormous government waste: the billion-dollar gas plants, billion-dollar waste on eHealth, outrageous CEO salaries and bonuses at Ornge air ambulance and Ontario Power Generation. Public CEOs are making millions of dollars each year. I repeat what NDP leader Andrea Horwath said about this: If you want to be a millionaire, you don't belong in public service.

We need to respect public dollars. We need the NDP's Financial Accountability Office open to stop government spending scandals before they start. We need to cut government waste so we can move forward in building the infrastructure we need and get moving in creating local jobs.

As an MPP for Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake and surrounding communities, you can count on me to get the job done: the new Niagara Falls hospital, with local workers; keep the Fort Erie racetrack open permanently and bring back the slots; keep Parliament Oak Public School open; and daily GO train service to Niagara Falls. Collectively, we need to create a better future for our children and our grandchildren.

I have a minute left. I want to tell a quick story about my campaign. I was lucky. When I ran my campaign, I had lots of workers, lots of help, but what I had most of was young people. I had young people that would work 10 and 12 and 14 hours because they believed in the message about creating jobs in the province of Ontario. These were highly skilled young people. They were motivated. They were committed. What we have to do over the course of this Parliament and beyond is to make sure those young people have a future, a future that is up to us to make sure happens for our kids and our grandkids. They are out there. They're talented. They need our help. Let's give it to them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. John Fraser: Before I start, I'd like to thank the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for ceding the floor. I thought that was very gracious of him, as he always is. And I'd like to congratulate the member from

Niagara Falls on his maiden speech. It was a great speech. Welcome to the Legislature. I look forward to working with you. There is a matter of debate up here in the back row as to whether the member from Windsor—Tecumseh has a better moustache than the member from Niagara Falls. I don't think that's ever going to come to a vote.

Interjection: Unanimous consent?

Mr. John Fraser: We could have a UC. My money is on the member from Niagara Falls.

I want to assure the member from Niagara Falls that we're all here for the same reasons. We all believe in the same things. We are all concerned about the things that matter most for families: Is my son or daughter going to get the help they need in school? Are they going to be able to get a job? Are they going to be able to buy a house? Are they going to be able to raise a family? Those are things that are important to all of us, no matter where we sit, and I want to assure him that all those things are important to me. I look forward to working with him towards finding out what the best way is to do that, because we all have different opinions, but we do come together and do things at times that really do benefit families.

I would like to say, in regards to the bill, in terms of looking at the prospects for jobs for young people, there are provisions in the bill that will use apprentices in provincial infrastructure projects. That will have to be done through regulation. That is, I think, one of the very positive aspects of the bill. I don't have enough time to go into the rest of the bill. I'd like to thank you again, and welcome.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I, too, would like to congratulate the newly elected member from Niagara Falls on his maiden speech. I remember almost 11 years ago when I had that opportunity to do a maiden speech, and it's a daunting moment, but I know the member from Niagara Falls has already been thrown into the breach here quite early. In his first day in the House, he had a couple of questions. He has come here with a great deal of passion, and that's a wonderful thing to bring to this House, because each and every member should remember who sent them here and why we're here. I think that Mr. Gates does that.

I have to express that I was down in that riding, working hard to see that he wasn't elected, but that is done. That was February 12, and now that Wayne has joined us, I welcome him here and wish him the very best, as we do all members of this House. It's an honour when you are elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as it is any Parliament, and each of us comes here with a great deal of enthusiasm and hope that we are going to make the positive changes that we dreamed about all through our life, if we ever had this opportunity. Sometimes the system does get in the way, but as long as we keep our ideals closely held and make our efforts as strong as possible, we will be doing our job.

While I have a couple of moments here, Speaker, I want to welcome to the House a couple of friends of mine from back in Renfrew county. I have here my friend Gerald Bloom from Combermere and Palmer Rapids, and also my friend David Shulist, who is the mayor of Madawaska Valley. They've joined us here for some part of the proceedings today. Welcome to Queen's Park, fellows.

In closing, again, I will remind my friend Mr. Gates that it is an amazing responsibility that you have accepted by becoming a member of provincial Parliament. We support one another in this endeavour. We may not always agree on the issues, but we always agree that we're all brothers and sisters in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a great pleasure to stand here and welcome my new buddy from the region of Niagara. I learned a bit during his maiden speech. I always knew that he had a great passion and pride for the Niagara region. I knew of his civic involvement with the United Way, for example. But I didn't know that he played goalie in the old-timers' hockey league. I always thought he was a bit of a left-winger.

Mr. Bill Walker: Quite a bit of a left-winger.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes.

But I do know that he's a jobs champion in Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls and all the points in between and in between. He's been fighting to save jobs in that region for some time, especially at the Fort Erie raceway. I know he's been known to place a few bets there, as I know the former president of the CAW, his good friend Ken Lewenza, has been known to place a few bets on the horses. I know that because I've done that myself.

It is such a great honour to be up here with the new member from Niagara, as he stands up and protects, as we've seen in his questions last week already—protecting education, protecting health care and standing up.

I thought he had a great sense of humour, Speaker, in his maiden speech when he talked about tourism in Niagara Falls, the honeymoon capital: But because of cuts in health care, you can make babies in Niagara Falls but you can no longer deliver them. I thought that was a great touch.

As a former city councillor myself, I know what Mr. Gates brings to the table and brings to this Legislature. He knows how to deal with the issues of his constituents in his riding and his region. We've already known he has a very strong voice to stand up and speak for the Niagara region. As a friend, and somebody who helped twist his arm a bit to convince him to run for this Legislature, I take great pride in joining the discussion this afternoon and welcoming him to this chamber.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: First of all, I too would like to welcome our honourable colleague, the newly elected MPP for Niagara Falls. I was thinking that there's Bill

Gates and then there's Wayne Gates, and they both have something to contribute to moving Ontario forward. As I say, we graciously welcome you. We congratulate you on your maiden speech.

I would, though, Mr. Gates, with your permission, just like to cite what I think were some of the rather ungracious remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition, by the Conservative Party, on your election. First of all, to retract for a moment, Mr. Yakabuski very kindly welcomed you, having confessed that he worked against you, but nevertheless, once the election was decided—the people have spoken, democracy rules and we welcome you graciously. But I have to say that the remarks by the honourable Leader of the Opposition, calling it essentially a victory of the union elites, that we were a David and Goliath kind of battle and “Give me a level playing field,” “Niagara Falls: That's a Conservative seat, no holds barred, and if they didn't have all these folks shipped in from all over Ontario”—now, there may be a climb-down from the Conservative position on that, too. Another subtext of the union-busting, anti-labour, pro-business sort of —

1640

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would just remind the speaker that when you are doing the comments and questions, they're in the context of what you have heard from the person who is speaking.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I thank you for that eloquent reminder, Madam Speaker, and reminding, as he spoke about his victory and the various folks who worked for him, including people from different parts of Ontario, the youth—I would simply say that those individuals who participated in their democratic right should have been recognized and applauded and not denigrated by the Leader of the Opposition characterizing them as union elites, and David and Goliath.

Thank you, Speaker, for helping me to tie those two issues together.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Niagara Falls has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Wayne Gates: First of all, I'd like to thank my fellow MPPs from Ottawa South, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Windsor–Tecumseh and Etobicoke North. I will address your comment on what was said about me in the election. Quite frankly, I'm none of those things that were said about me. What I will tell you is that I'm a father and I'm a grandfather—a very proud father and a very proud grandfather. I had the privilege, at a very young age, to come out of a school and get a good union job, quite frankly. I was able to raise my three daughters. I was able to put one through figure skating, and those that follow sports know that's quite the chore. I had my other one in rowing and softball. I coached their softball team. My youngest daughter, Jacqueline—I've been able to put her through dance. I was able to have a house. We were able to go on family vacations together. So I'm none of what they say. I'm a very proud father. I'm a very proud grandfather. Like everybody with kids, you love them to death, and they love me.

What they said about me was unfortunate. It happens in politics, but I'm also big enough to know that politics is a tough game sometimes. Sometimes you respond to it, and sometimes you just go forward and talk about what was important, and what was important in the Niagara Falls riding, quite frankly, was jobs. It was about having hope for our young people. It was about getting health care, publicly funded health care, and making sure that was taken care of. It was about keeping schools open. So all the things that were out there, I just kept going forward. Everybody in this House, all I want you to know is that I was lucky that I was able to raise my children the way I could, and I'm none of the things they said about me.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I, too, would like to welcome—and I was pleased to cede my position to allow the member from Niagara Falls to do his inaugural speech. I wish him luck, and I guess time will tell if he's a great left-winger or not.

I am proud and privileged to be the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and to stand today and speak to this bill. My riding is home to 117,000 residents, who utilize 148 bridges and culverts and 650 kilometres of roads in Bruce county alone, and 189 bridges and culverts and 877 kilometres of roads in Grey county. It is home to a renowned marine program at Georgian College in Owen Sound, and I'm going to speak a little bit more about that later on in my remarks; a federally designated airport in Wiarton, and again, a huge infrastructure need there, so I'm going to address that; less-than-adequate broadband, and I'm going to address that; and I would be remiss if I didn't talk about industrial wind turbines that have mocked the rural landscape and made it look like a “mangy porcupine.” That's a quote by respected Sun Media commentator Jim Merriam.

Essentially, there's no public transportation in my riding, unfortunately. This House passed a motion before we rose for winter break to address that. I'm still waiting for that, but I'm hopeful that is coming forward.

The people in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound want and need stronger investments in transportation infrastructure, telecommunications, broadband, the general infrastructure of our roads and bridge infrastructure, and Internet services to enjoy the same economic and social level playing field as their urban counterparts.

The question of whether or not Bill 141 can ensure that rural Ontario gets its fair share of infrastructure investments remains an enigma under this Liberal government that has squandered billions of dollars on scandals and boondoggles like the gas plant cancellations. So I'm hopeful; I remain positive and hopeful, but I sure hope they come through and do the things that are needed to allow rural Ontario to thrive.

Every time I rise to speak about infrastructure inequalities in Ontario, I feel compelled to remind the Liberal government of that controversial policy paper they quietly adopted back in 2004. The report, Investing in

People, contains a troubling section entitled "Small, Rural, and Remote Communities: The Anatomy of Risk." This section reads like rural Ontario's obituary. It directs the government to pull the plug on rural industries, businesses and infrastructure, leaving its residents, many of whom are rapidly aging, to fend for themselves.

In case the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation missed any of my prior debates in this House challenging this report, I will share with him a copy by way of a page. If I could have one of the pages, please, deliver this to Minister Murray. Thank you, Thomas.

Minister, this report again maps out in no uncertain terms the path of the wrecking ball over rural communities, and we've felt the weight of your government's wrecking ball, from the hundreds of jobs you have sabotaged after pulling the plug on the Slots at Racetracks Program—in our backyard, the Hanover Raceway; shutting down provincial jails—the Owen Sound jail we've lost; education opportunities you've destroyed after closing down education centres, including the Blue-water Technology Access Centre in my riding; and the retirement savings you ruined and the homes you devalued after littering our community with unwanted industrialized wind factories, not to mention that you've taken democracy away from our local communities and those local elected officials.

The reality is stark. The reality is that this anti-rural Ontario report and the policies you plucked from it have essentially turned rural communities into your political carnage, Liberal government. The reality is that your ministry website contains reports on Toronto subways and transit, urban growth and investments, and they're by the same authors of The Anatomy of Risk report that I just had hand-delivered to you.

As I said, the reality is stark indeed if you're from rural Ontario. This idea that your Bill 141 is capable of reversing any of this decade-old carnage is highly suspect and doubtful. After all, if you were really sincere about getting this right and setting credible long-term targets for infrastructure for all of Ontario, you would begin by first sharing with rural Ontario its fair cut of the gas tax. If you'll recall, this is a bill, PMB Bill 3, which was tabled and passed in this House by my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, John Yakabuski. I believe it was the seventh time he had to bring it before the NDP—who prop up the Liberals—and the Liberals actually voted in favour. It's only time now that that actual money gets transferred to those in rural Ontario so that they can play on a level playing field.

The backlog of rural infrastructure, hospitals, airports, education institutions, Internet infrastructure and public transportation—you only need to look at the infrastructure backlog in my great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and I'm going to start with the Markdale hospital project.

Bill 141's key principle about the need for government planning and investments to take a long-term view in fact scares me and my constituents. The government has been looking at—looking, talking, discussing, talking, looking,

discussing—this hospital project for over 10 years, despite making a promise to the proud people of that area that if they raised their share—which they did; they rose to the occasion and raised \$12 million. They're still waiting on that.

I would suggest to you that there has been way too much talk and conversation and a lot less action than what we require, so I'm hoping that now—I'm going to ask them directly, as they contemplate where they're going to put these infrastructure dollars. There's never been a better time than now to build this hospital. I question if this bill can succeed in ensuring the long-term projects such as the Markdale hospital. The jobs that it would create, the sustainability for a whole region—it's paramount. We really, really hope that the Liberal government will stand behind their word on this occasion and step up to the plate for those people who have been standing, waiting idly by, and losing out on great services.

Rural hospital projects, unfortunately, are just one part of the problem. The Wiarton Keppel International Airport is in need of investment. The people on the Bruce Peninsula depend on the Wiarton airport as well for bringing in all kinds of traffic from all over the world. It's also an Ornge depot for medical evacuations. Just this January, Ornge used the airport four times for those medical evacuations. Recent inspections have found that the main runway, which is about 30 years old, needs to be replaced. If the work isn't done, the airport certification will be pulled. That's a huge economic blow to our whole area. I'm told that if you lose that certification, it's virtually impossible to get it back. It would have huge ramifications on future projects, on future job growth, on the future sustainability of not only the Bruce Peninsula but the whole area of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

1650

There are very few federal airports in a rural riding. It's imperative that we keep that. It's about a \$3-million need and investment. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that that's a catalyst for other investments. I think once we redo that landing strip, it will bring more and more opportunities back to our area. Again, I implore the minister to give that due consideration.

Your colleague and the previous economic development minister should be aware of this issue, as I've written to him about it. I've written to you about it. The airport, again, is a valuable commodity to the regional economy and the tourism industry, as it helps attract investment and jobs and it can accommodate service to and from the United States and has four times as much direct employment as other airports. We now even have people wanting to come from international destinations to this great airport because of the parks that we have on the northern part of the Bruce Peninsula. We have people coming from all over the world to utilize our great backyard diving opportunities and various other tourism opportunities.

One that is very near and dear to my heart and that I think plays a significant role—and I hope the minister

will, in fact, give extreme due diligence and consideration to this one—is the future of the Marine Emergency Duties Training Program. It's being divested by the federal government. Currently, it is located in Port Colborne. It's actually now moving to the marine campus in Owen Sound. We are a marine centre of excellence. We're the only one in the province; we're the only one in mid-Canada. It makes sense: We're located by the Great Lakes. It makes sense to have a marine training facility and program there. But it's absolutely critical—this whole program remains in limbo if this government does not give explicit support as quickly as possible. The clock is ticking and we need to ensure that this remains here. The minister again knows what I'm talking about in this. I've written him a handful of times, asking for his government's support in ensuring that central Canada's only marine firefighter program is continued in Owen Sound.

I've invited him to tour the Owen Sound campus of Georgian College to see first-hand the renowned Great Lakes International Marine Training and Research Centre that we have, in the hope he would support the MED training program. A number of years ago, the government put a number of dollars, significant dollars, as did private industry, to put in the only simulator in central Canada. My fear, again, is that if this whole program doesn't get moved there and made sustainable, we'll lose that, and then what will happen is all the people who need training from the marine industry will end up going to the east coast and the west coast. The industry will collapse, and at the end of the day it will be a down-cycle of fewer jobs in the great province of Ontario.

I can't imagine you could leverage money better, Mr. Minister, than by putting some dollars into this facility, this needed infrastructure project, which would allow more jobs to be created, would allow the sustainability of the college in Owen Sound, a centre of excellence for marine. We would draw people from around the world to this renowned training program. It would allow students to stay. It would be a great opportunity for students looking for a career. I believe their placement percentage right now is about 98% for the students who go through the marine training. It's having a renaissance. We've got a great marine industry in Ontario. Mr. Jack Leitch was up a little while ago. They named a wing after him. We've got private sector that came to the fore and put money into that training facility because they know that there will be great economic opportunities and sustainability of jobs if we keep this thriving industry going.

Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely critical not only to Owen Sound's future sustainability but to that of Ontario, the marine shipping industry, and it's at risk. If we don't get some money through this infrastructure program, I'm very sadly thinking that we could lose that whole industry to the west or the east coast.

Another significant area of interest in our riding is the dredging of the Owen Sound harbour. It's always been a pride of the Great Lakes. It plays a critical role. We have a number of large companies that use it to bring in sand,

to bring in all the crops from the farming and agricultural industry to ship them abroad. We're in need of dredging. I know my federal colleague Larry Miller is working very hard on this. We've got private industries that are looking at this dredging of the harbour and want to ensure that this goes forward. Right now, we're caught in a bit of a technical loophole where it needs to be dredged to allow other interests to take it over. Again, there's a divestiture program in place.

We need this government to step up to help the whole region. We have a company, P&H, that is located in Hanover as well as in Owen Sound. They currently operate the silos. They are prepared to step up, but we need the government to come to the table and allow some activity to move forward, some approvals to move forward, and, most importantly, some infrastructure funding to allow this very critical port along the whole Great Lakes system—and it can't go without saying just how critical this is to the economic survival and sustainability of our great community of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound: the jobs it creates, the future opportunities. Again, for those students, what better linkage if we could have that marine engineering and emergency training program at Georgian College? We've got the harbour right there. We can do the training, and we have a natural built-in environment for those people coming to look and work in the marine industry. That centre of excellence I told you about would sustain Georgian College's future—and a key tenet. They operate other campuses, of course, we know, across the province. They do fantastic work as Georgian College. They're leaders in the college community in the training and development of our youth, providing opportunities for our youth.

But, Mr. Speaker, I can't say enough how critical it is that these two programs—the marine emergency training program—receive the funding to be able to build the capacity that they need to provide the first-class, world-class training facility, to ensure that that simulator remains in Owen Sound and for the industry. This harbour is absolutely a critical one if we're going to move up.

The other one I want to talk at length about a little bit here is, finally, the broadband services in my riding. In fact, on Friday morning, I'm going to be meeting with all the local mayors, the county representatives, the CAOs and a number of others to talk about broadband service.

It's interesting—I've lived my whole life—I was born and raised in the great village of Hepworth, Ontario, Canada. I've done a lot of my work in Wiarton. You might have heard of a groundhog up there, Wiarton Willie. Without the shadow of a doubt, he's the absolute key prognosticator for our country.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Well, let's not pump me out of here too quickly. This is Wiarton Billy, not Wiarton Willie.

What I was trying to say is, we have people all the time—I've lived there my whole life. People move up as cottagers. They come and travel through the area. They visit and they fall in love with it, and they say, "Why would I not want to be able to work here and live here?"

A fellow I just met a little while ago, Brad Fletcher, moved back from the west coast. He used to be from our area but moved away and had his career. He's in the technological business. He's coming back and he's saying, "You know what? There are limitations here." Luckily, I guess, for him, he's kind of at the senior end of his career, but what he's really noticing is, we do not have the equal broadband service that most people in the urban areas take for granted.

We have the most beautiful, beautiful area in the world to work. We've got all the natural attractions you would want. We've got clean air. We don't, fortunately, yet have many of these ugly wind turbines dotting our landscape, although they're trying to force those through. Thank you to all those people who are opposing them and standing up and fighting the good fight. Hopefully, we will get this government to understand that they are a blight on our landscape. They're not efficient, and we need to stop them and put a moratorium on them.

But we do need broadband service. We need to be able to create a level playing field in rural Ontario. Contrary to the report *The Anatomy of Risk* that I shared with you just a few minutes ago, we're not prepared in rural Ontario—certainly not in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—to give up the great fabric of our community, the spirit, the loyalty, the camaraderie and the people who band together for their children and their grandchildren to be able to have that lifestyle that they've enjoyed in a small, rural, cohesive setting.

But what we truly need is funding for our broadband service. We need to be able to bring in fibre optic and ensure that everyone in my great riding has the same equal access to that broadband service. We can compete in any industry, in any area of interest, as long as we have the same level playing field. I would hope that the Liberal government of today and the NDP, depending on where they're going to side with this next budget, will stand up for the people of rural Ontario and things like these infrastructure projects to ensure that rural Ontario is not a have-not, to ensure that we have the same equal and fair access.

It's our responsibility for our young people, those pages sitting in front of you today and those watching at home. Next session, I'm going to have a page from my riding, and I'm certainly here for the most part working for his generation to ensure that Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound will always be a thriving metropolis, that we can have people back to our homes and not have to leave if they so choose. Of course, many young people like to move. They like to spread their roots and go out and experience the world, and that's their opportunity. But what we want to do is ensure that if they don't want to leave, they don't have to.

I have two young boys. My son Ben is 16, and my son Zachary is 19. They're both in a situation right now—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: They are fine young men. Thank you. Most of the credit for that is to their mother.

I want them to have the privilege and opportunity that I have. I am so passionate about my home area, and I'll

never leave. They'll have to drag me out. But in today's economic realities, we need the ability for technology to play its part. We need us to be able to rise to the occasion and show the world what Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has to offer. We truly do have the capacity, the skills, the talent, the ingenuity, the innovation and the passion, but what we need is the technological infrastructure to allow us to compete with downtown Toronto, with downtown London, with downtown Guelph, with downtown Kitchener–Waterloo. We need to be on a level playing field with Ottawa.

With the enhancement of that broadband service to an area like Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, there is no limiting what we can do. There's no limit to the opportunity, and I think what we'll find is a whole new graduate degree level of people who want to come back home and those who don't want to leave home. We'll have people who actually have never even heard of our area, but once they discover us—again, through our great friend Wiarton Willie—the area that we have and the ability for them to come to one of the most beautiful places on earth—obviously, I'm a little biased, but it certainly is one of those places that, once people come to it or they see it on the Internet, they make it a destination. They want to see the clean blue waters. They want to travel to the Bruce Peninsula. They want to come and enjoy the beach at Sauble. They come to Wiarton and visit Wiarton Willie. They want to come to Markdale, to Chapman's factory, and we need those types of businesses.

1700

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Great ice cream.

Mr. Bill Walker: Absolutely; the best ice cream in Canada, I might suggest. I think even Rick Mercer said that.

We need to level the playing field. I see that the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities is here, and I know I've written some letters to him in regard to this marine emergency program, so I'm hoping he's taking great listening today and he's going to add a letter of support to his fellow minister Mr. Murray and ensure that there is some funding for the marine engineering emergency program at Georgian College. I know I've talked to you on numerous occasions and I know I can count on your support, Minister. I truly do appreciate that. I would hope that, more than talk, though, there's a cheque to be following in the mail—because we really can't let this industry leave the great province of Ontario—and I know you want to make sure that happens.

I want to make sure, Mr. Minister, that at the end of the day, with those apprentices for that College of Trades, there are at least people left in the province that you can go off and chase with all these fees, so we need to ensure that that remains here.

I'm just going to partly summarize. Again, the other one is transportation. I passed a private member's resolution—my first in this House. It received unanimous support of all three parties. That was before we rose for Christmas break. I'm still waiting on the government to actually bring that forward. I asked for an all-party com-

mittee. It shouldn't be partisan. People in transportation, of all stripes, need to be able to get to work, get to volunteer opportunities, get to the hospital when needed, and get out and visit relatives who are in need, particularly with keeping care at home.

Mr. Speaker, I'm really, really sincere. I've got people from all over the province writing me letters saying, "Mr. Walker: great job in bringing that to the forefront; great job in ensuring that the government understands the needs of rural and northern Ontario, but where's the action? What's going to happen?" I turn it over again to the government of the day, the Liberals: Where is that? It was unanimously approved, so I really hope they will do that.

I've talked again, more specifically, about one. We're aware, and I've made the minister aware, of requests from the city of Owen Sound. We lost our Greyhound bus service. There are a lot of old, outdated regulations and legislation in place that would allow private companies to come in and do a lot more, a lot more flexibility and actually make viable, sustainable runs to allow, again, something that should be fair and equitable for all residents of Ontario: a good transportation program. I hope the government will take that into consideration and know there aren't just GTA transportation needs; there are huge needs in rural and northern Ontario.

Ontario's infrastructure deficit remains sizable. There's no doubt they've squandered billions and billions of dollars on things like gas plants, eHealth and the Ornge helicopter fiasco. Mr. Speaker, if we'd had that money, a lot of these infrastructure concerns I have—and I haven't been into the bridges and culverts that we have just in Bruce and Grey, although I did bring that up at the first of my greetings. We need to stop wasting the valuable dollars that we bring in from the hard-working taxpayers of our great province.

I want to, just one more time, implore the minister to give serious consideration to our broadband needs, to our marine emergency program needs, to the dredging of our dock in Owen Sound, and to the Wiarton airport runway that we need to update. We have a lot of needs in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, but we also have huge opportunity. I want to have hope for those who live there now. I want to declare hope for those who are going to come in the future, so that we always have the sustainable, vibrant, creative, caring community that Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is. Without a shadow of a doubt, Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister has heard every word and will give due diligence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's a pleasure to rise and speak in response to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. One of the things that he touched on that I made note of, and I think is quite important, is that infrastructure investment is really a question of creating equal and fair access; that the idea of providing funding for and the development of good infrastructure would allow for different communities, particularly rural communities, to have more access to important resources.

I want to touch a bit on the concept of broadband Internet as a resource and as an access issue. In our society now I think it's well established that—no one has any doubt about it—access to the Internet is no longer strictly a leisure activity or an entertainment activity. It is a fundamental resource that allows us to access government services and it allows us to access important information and knowledge. It can be a tool for teaching, and also it can be a tool to help drive the economy. There are many information-based economies in this world, and one of the key ingredients to develop an information-based or technology-based economy is to be able to have high-speed Internet that's reliable and that's fast to transfer data back and forth. There are many developers for applications and computer programmers who rely on access to the Internet and can live in any jurisdiction and can live in any community to do that. In rural communities, particularly, where there is affordable housing or the price and the cost of living are somewhat less than some urban centres, it can be a potential great opportunity for young entrepreneurs who want to start up a business, start up a company, and they simply need affordable living, as well as access to the Internet. Great idea, and I support that notion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I'm pleased to follow my colleagues from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and Bramalea–Gore–Malton sans Springdale. In any case, the bill is quite comprehensive, Bill 141. In moving from bricks, mortar, even up to broadband, there are a number of components of it.

I'd just like the House, as well as people listening, to be aware that the government of Ontario has committed on the order of about \$85 billion since 2003 to upgrade and revamp and recreate public infrastructure in this province. The 2013 Ontario budget has included \$35 billion in projected spending for the next three years, including in calendar year 2013-14—or maybe it's fiscal year; you have to ask the accountants—\$13.5 billion.

There are a number of different components in this, in terms of the principles, I think perhaps best characterized as the professionalization of infrastructure planning, whether it's the long-range view, the long-term planning, the on-the-ground assessments kind of incorporation of the demographics and, of course, the built environment, as well as the local natural environment. I can give you an example specifically from the great riding of Etobicoke North. We were not too long ago recently announcing a \$200-million expansion to Etobicoke General Hospital, part of the William Osler system.

I was very pleased to be part of that announcement, not only for, of course, the ribbon-cutting ceremony, but beyond that, what it will mean for members of the community. It's a four-storey expansion—I think it's like an acre and a half—cardiac wing, emergency room facilities, laboratory testing, ultimately a result of the demographic search or demographic scan of the community. What this Bill 141 attempts to do is to generalize that for the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I've been in this chamber now going on three years, and I've come to know the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound quite well, and I have to say that he serves his constituents remarkably. He does a fantastic job. He's always in the House here talking to bills and bringing up the concerns that his constituents have, so I have to give him kudos for that. He's doing a bang-up job, and I think the people back home in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound need to recognize that.

That being said, he did raise some very good points, as he always does; he's a very well-thought-out individual who thinks about what he says before he says it. One of the things that caught my attention was broadband. In rural Ontario, this is a huge issue, particularly in my riding of Northumberland–Quinte West, where of course it's the lovely rolling hills of Northumberland. I would encourage all members in the NDP caucus, as well as the Liberal caucus—the member from Peterborough loves coming to Northumberland–Quinte West, and I encourage him to come back even more frequently. But with the lovely rolling hills of Northumberland, what that does is it makes it much harder for broadband Internet services to be provided, given the geographical terrain.

I think that these are initiatives that we need to push forward. I know our federal counterparts have done a fantastic job in investing large sums of money in rural Ontario and across Canada as a whole for broadband services. I think this is another area that I'll definitely be speaking to in a few moments when I speak to Bill 141.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for your time.
1710

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You already had one.

The member for Peterborough and Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I always enjoy listening to my good friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I had the opportunity on a couple of occasions to be in Owen Sound, a wonderful community. Of course, it's the home of one of the most colourful members ever to serve in this Ontario Legislature, one Eddie Sargent. When I see the member over there, I'm kind of reminded a little bit—I got to meet Mr. Sargent I guess in the late 1980s, and of course his daughter, Patti Belle Noble, I think, worked in the constituency office there, up in Owen Sound. It was great. One thing you could always depend upon the representatives from that riding to be is certainly a great representative of that riding, and to bring the issues of the day.

Mr. Speaker, I must be somewhat apologetic. I didn't get the opportunity to hear all the speech today. I just came in on the tail end of it, but I'm quite sure that the content of the tail end was reflective of all the speech from start to finish.

This is a very important bill. We'd like to see collaboration on all sides of the House, for the opposition, the third party and the government to come together in a common purpose. When I'm talking to my good friends at the East City Coffee Shop in Peterborough, on Hunter Street—great menu, very economical. I was there a couple of weeks ago. We had a chat, and they're saying, "Jeff, when you get back to Queen's Park, you tell everybody that you want everybody to work together," because in a minority government all 107 members are part of government. We can make this place work very, very well, a collaboration to get these kind of bills through.

I do recommend to you, Mr. Speaker, that the next time you happen to drop by Peterborough, go to the East City Coffee Shop on Hunter Street East: a wonderful menu, great hospitality, and you'll learn a lot about the community by going there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): But you didn't offer to buy me a coffee. I hope to avail myself of the member's hospitality. Thank you very much.

I return to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and he has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you to the speakers from Etobicoke North, my colleague from Northumberland–Quinte West—and I'll just return the favour that you too do a great job on behalf of your residents in ensuring that their needs are brought to this chamber. To the Minister of Rural Affairs, thank you. Yes, we certainly have a bit of a history: Mr. Sargent; Bill Murdoch, my immediate predecessor. Hopefully I can stand up to the same tests that they did. Maybe, Minister, you could honour their service to the community by showing your support at the cabinet table for those projects that I'm about to rehash.

The marine emergency department, Minister: I've offered a number of things for you and I've sent you some notes on that. I sincerely hope you'll give that consideration. If that marine training facility leaves Ontario, we've done an injustice to the young people and to the future of our province, because that truly is something that is a niche area. How can the Great Lakes not have a marine engineering training program on the Great Lakes? Owen Sound is well-positioned. Georgian College is already the leader. Minister, I hope you'll give that consideration.

The dredging of the Owen Sound harbour is one that I brought up. Again, it's absolutely critical. What better way? You've got the marine training program. If you fund that—when you fund that—you have that ability, and then you have the students right there utilizing the harbour and in fact getting jobs right there.

The Markdale hospital: You've made promises for 10 years. Please, please, please, for the people of Markdale and area who have been so patient, come through with that one and allow that hospital to be built and give them hope.

The Wiarton Keppel airport, now owned by the town of South Bruce Peninsula and Georgian Bluffs: We need that runway to be redone. It's a federal port. It's a federal airstrip, and if we don't have that, we're going to lose it.

It will never be there. It has huge economic opportunities for jobs and the thriving sustainability of the Bruce Peninsula.

And as we've talked about, broadband: It's truly a catalyst for a rural area, Minister and Mr. Speaker. What it does is, we create the environment. If that broadband is brought in and we create a level playing field, then business comes along and does their part. They ensure there are opportunities. They create jobs. They create hope. They create prosperity for the sustainability of the great area of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Thank you for the opportunity today, Mr. Speaker, and, Minister, I hope you give due consideration.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnett): Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm pleased to be recognized as well.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to speak today on government Bill 141, Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013. I'll begin my remarks with just a brief overview of some of the supportable initiatives of this bill. In general, the purpose component or the purpose element of the act, of the proposed bill, is something that's quite encouraging. The purpose talks about establishing mechanisms to encourage a number of things, one of them being an evidence-based and long-term infrastructure planning initiative. Whatever the topic may be in this government or in any government, I think that we need to really focus in on this: Many of our decisions that we make are emotional, or many of the decisions—let me make it more clear—that the government makes, whether it's federal or provincial, are emotional decisions. If you look back on your life and you look back at the decisions you made and think about how many decisions you made that were emotional and the outcome of those decisions, and compare those with decisions you made where you thought it through and had a rational, logical reason for what you did, I'm sure you'll find that your emotion-based decision-making was inferior to your logic- and rationale-based decision-making.

Similarly, I think we need to make sure that with any investment in this province, with any decision-making in this province, and particularly with something as important and resource-heavy as infrastructure planning, we need to make those decisions based on evidence and make sure that our vision is long-term.

In the purpose section, it also talks about tying in infrastructure planning with job creation and training opportunities. Many folks have talked about the fact that infrastructure development is one of the best ways—a very solid and dependable way—of creating job opportunities. It's kind of a synergistic effect, because once you have the infrastructure planning and development, you build the infrastructure, you create jobs, and then the fact that that infrastructure exists also creates opportunity for more jobs. So it has a doubling effect.

I'm also particularly encouraged by the fact that the purpose in this bill includes a section talking about the

importance not only of economic growth and job creation elements, but also that there should be a component for infrastructure planning that speaks to the protection of the environment. It's essential that we keep all these factors in mind when we're developing infrastructure. We need to make sure that our environment is taken care of, because there are many, many costs. There are health costs that flow from the negative impact from infrastructure planning and development. If we don't take into consideration the environmental impacts, it could have significant impacts on our natural resources, particularly water, which is one of our most vital and plentiful resources in Ontario, but it is one of the most vulnerable and precarious resources, given the fact that it is so susceptible to pollution, pollutants and environmental damage. So I'm encouraged by the purpose component, which starts off the act, and those elements guide the bill in a positive direction.

Essentially, the bill calls for the government to follow a number of principles when creating an infrastructure plan, and I think we've seen what happens when you don't have a solid vision for infrastructure planning. We've seen the pitfalls and some of the deleterious effects of that. We've seen that. We've seen what happens in a province where we don't have a long-term vision for how we can build infrastructure, and we've seen how much that costs us as a society. And so it's vital, it's essential, it's quite important to make sure we have a long-term plan.

Not only does the bill talk about the fact that we need to have a long-term plan, it also talks about the requirement of timing for when these plans need to be developed, and it also talks about the contents of what a plan needs to include.

1720

The fact that the bill talks about setting the initial timeline of three years to lay out a plan, and then subsequently no later than five years after the previous plan is tabled, creates the necessity to have plans presented in a timely manner. The contents go through some key issues that are things that we can support, notably inventory of the infrastructure, evaluation of the infrastructure, the age of the assets and the condition of the infrastructure assets.

However, there is a large elephant in the room that is not addressed by this bill. It's something I think we need to spend some time to talk about, to really reflect on and to really have a serious discussion about the direction our province is headed—not only this province. If you look at it nationally, it's a decision and an issue that, Canada-wide, we really need to reflect on and think about. That's the reliance, and it seems to be growing reliance, on the P3 model. We just need to take a careful, considered look at it.

First, let's talk about it: It's public-private partnerships. They were touted as a solution, a panacea—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Good word.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: —thank you—to fix the problems of a failing government, of struggling economics

and of a limited pool of resources. This would be a solution for these problems.

However, I draw your attention to the beginning of my speech: that we need to make sure our decisions are evidence-based and not emotion-based. Sometimes we look at something, and it sounds like it's good. It sounds like a great idea. It may look like a good idea. It may sell well because it sounds good. But when you get to the facts, when you look at the evidence, if it doesn't pan out, then we can't continue down that path. If the evidence isn't there, we shouldn't make a decision.

We shouldn't continue down a path where we know historically it hasn't worked because, generally speaking, if something hasn't worked time and time again, history has a habit of repeating itself. That's evidence that should inform our decisions. If we know that a particular technique is just not working, we shouldn't continue to do it.

With respect to P3s, there's ample evidence that it doesn't work. I was able to pull up a paper that went into some detail about P3s and looked at them in a measured way and looked at the notion of why it began. Why did people think, "Let's come up with this idea of a public and private partnership"? Why was that something that the government back in the 1990s in the United Kingdom thought was a great idea?

Well, the idea behind it was that it would allow private industry to shoulder the costs, shoulder the risks, shoulder the burden, of developing infrastructure. While that sounds like it might be a good idea, the evidence is to the contrary. I have a quote to read here from the author of the report called *The Problem with Public-Private Partnerships*; the author is Toby Sanger. "P3s had been used by politicians as a form of off-book accounting to make it appear as if public spending and deficits were lower than they actually were—but then public auditors forced governments to include these obligations on their books." That showed that, in fact, the costs that derived from P3s are, in almost every circumstance, much higher than they would have been if it was simply a public investment. Really, it's a tactic that takes the cost of a project off of the public's books, off of the government's books, and provides the appearance that there's less debt in the government. But really, in the long run, the rate-payers, the taxpayers, the citizens of the province end up paying a lot more.

I'll give you a couple of examples; there are significant examples of this. I'll start with one great example, which cuts close to home for me. In Brampton this was a flagship for the idea of public-private partnerships. The Auditor General recently revealed that the flagship P3 Brampton Civic Hospital cost \$200 million more than if it had been built and financed publicly directly by the province. That's \$200 million of an increased cost through using a P3. That does not benefit the public; that does not benefit the province. That's \$200 million that could have been used more effectively.

There are other examples across the country. Another example is the west coast highway, if you look at BC:

BC's Sea-to-Sky Highway is anticipated to cost an additional \$220 million more than if it had been strictly publicly financed and operated.

One other example, in terms of universities: They tried a P3 project in Quebec for a university. The P3 project at Université de Québec à Montréal failed, and it doubled the cost to the public from \$200 million to a whopping \$400 million.

Again, these are just a couple of the multitude of examples of where P3s have failed the public, and in fact have cost us a lot more. It's simply a strategy of making it look like the province doesn't have the debt, that the government doesn't have the debt, but really, in the long run we're paying a lot more.

If that's the evidence, if the evidence shows—and I challenge everyone to look at the evidence and if you can refute this, refute it. I'm open to that discussion; it's important to engage in that discussion. We need to look at examples. We need to look at the evidence. If the evidence is that consistently, more often than not, P3s cost us more, if they cost taxpayers more, then we shouldn't be using them. It's a model that doesn't work. We in the NDP have had serious concerns with P3s as a model, and it's something that this bill doesn't look at.

A simple amendment would be to assess the cost of the model of funding and balance any cost of any model proposed with a publicly funded model and look at what has a long-term benefit or cost to the province. I think if we added that into the long-term funding or the long-term infrastructure planning, if that was a component we added in, we'd be a lot better off. We'd actually be able to have a true measure of what's the most effective way of funding our infrastructure. I encourage you to look at that. Let's just make it evidence-based. We started off—the principle of this bill was that it should be an evidence-based decision-making process. Let's make sure that the evidence-based decision-making process includes a true assessment of the cost of the P3, or whatever model it is, and a publicly funded model to make sure we have a true cost comparison. If it turns out that another model works and it's, long-term, more affordable and not going to cost us more, that's a different thing.

There's one pitfall, though. There's one escape mechanism that, in my respectful submission, kind of presents a distorted picture of what P3s offer. In the analysis, in the measurement of the costs or the benefits when you look at the P3 model, there is an assessment for risk costs, the added value to risk. They give that risk a value, and if you add that risk value in to any sort of calculation, it inflates or it deflates the numbers to the point that it makes the P3 look like it's a better option. I encourage an evidence-based assessment of this "risk" analysis that's used often, and I say that in quotations because—the quotation here that I want to turn your attention to, again from Mr. Sanger, is that, "In every single project approved so far as a P3 in Ontario, the costs would have been lower through traditional procurement if they had not inflated by these calculations of the value of 'risk.'" So the risk is given a value that throws off the calculations. The reason why I say it's a distorted view is

because the calculation of risk is something that's done without any real objective measurement. It's arbitrary. Often the numbers are pulled out of the air, and so that's something that we really need to look at.

I want to give you a great story of the concept of long-term planning. We talk about long-term planning; what does that look like? What is long-term planning? How can we, as politicians, create a vision that's beyond ourselves? There's a great quote that I think of all the time when I think of what I can do in this Parliament, and it's the idea—it's a Jack Layton quote; it's a great quote. He says, "Dream a dream that's longer than your lifetime"—a dream, a vision, that's more than just your short time here on earth. If we extrapolate that to us as politicians, dream a dream that's longer than our four-year term.

1730

There's a great example of this that has been done here in our beautiful city of Toronto, and it's the Prince Edward Viaduct. Who knows about the Prince Edward Viaduct? Raise your arm. I'm going to give you a great lesson about it, then.

The Prince Edward Viaduct, also known as the Don Valley viaduct, is essentially—

Hon. Jeff Leal: I know about the Barry's Bay viaduct.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Well, that's not the one we're talking about today; we're talking about the Prince Edward Viaduct here.

Anyway, the Prince Edward Viaduct: Back in 1910, the city council of Toronto had an opportunity to build, basically, a bridge across the Don Valley. The Don Valley, as you all know, is a beautiful ravine: very lush, very green. The question was, they needed to link the east and the west side of the city, so they needed to build a bridge. A fancy word for a bridge: "viaduct."

This was a bit of a controversial issue. In 1910, there was a referendum put so that the people of the city could talk about this, could decide this. It lost. In 1912, the referendum lost by 59 votes. In 1913, it won by 9,236 votes. This initiative, this idea, was the vision of the commissioner of public works, R.C. Harris, so he should get some credit for that.

Essentially, think about it this way: Back in 1913, when this was approved, when they voted on it, the vision was, "We're going to build a bridge, we're going to build a viaduct, and it's going to cost us an additional cost to allow for the bridge to have a potential subway expansion." To allow for that subway expansion would cost the city an additional amount of money. Back in that time, it was significant, in the millions. To allow for that additional expansion, it would cost them a certain amount. But they thought ahead. If there was ever a time that we needed to actually build a subway, the cost would be astronomically higher to build a brand new piece of infrastructure, another bridge, another structure to allow for the subway. In 1913, they knew this idea of a subway expansion wasn't going to happen in the next five years, wasn't going to happen in the next 10 years; this subway expansion wasn't going to happen in the next 20 years. It actually happened 53 years later. So they thought not a

decade but five decades into the future. They thought, "If we build this now, it's going to cost us not too much—an additional cost, but not too much more. But we know that sometime in the future, the city is going to need to have the ability to and will want to build a subway that will link the two sides of the city. So let's think five decades ahead and give a gift," one that the politicians at that time not only were not going to see in their election term, but that they weren't going to see in their lifetime. They gave a gift to the city of Toronto that was five decades into the future.

So in 1966, when the Toronto Transit Commission opened up the Bloor-Danforth subway, it was actually only possible because of the forward thinking of the folks from 1913, the fact that they thought, "When we build this viaduct, let's allow for an expansion, let's allow for the accommodation of a subway that we're not going to be able to build in our election term, that we're not even going to be able to build in our lifetime, but that our grandchildren's grandchildren, perhaps, or our grandchildren, perhaps, will be able to make use of." They actually built the subway, and it's a beautiful subway that connects the east and west parts of the city.

That's an example of some long-term infrastructure planning. That is something we can all look to as inspiration for forward thinking, for people who thought beyond their political lifetime. They thought beyond their actual life on this earth. That's a vision for what we can do if we really think ahead, a vision for better infrastructure planning for this province. I wanted to make sure that if we talked about long-term planning for infrastructure, I could share this example with you. This example could be used as something that we could emulate, hopefully, in our decision-making.

With that, I will summarize my three major points: Let's make sure that our decisions are based on evidence, not on emotion. If we want to have long-term-vision planning, let's look at the example of the Prince Edward Viaduct as inspiration for that. Finally, let's have a serious discussion and reflection on the merits, and I think the costs, of the P3 system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's interesting because we actually had the press conference to launch this bill right at the base of the Prince Edward Viaduct. We used that as the example when I was asked, what should this bill accomplish? It should build more of this. It was a design because it also includes all kinds of things: long-term planning—exactly what the member opposite said. That's what this bill is. It actually takes plans and makes them into long-term budgets.

The other thing that's interesting about the Prince Edward Viaduct is, it was a collaboration between Edmund Burke, one of Canada's most famous architects; and Thomas Taylor, who was an engineer. That doesn't happen anymore because after R. C. Harris left, architects were no longer involved in design. So we're going to bring architects back, with engineers, into designing major projects to build those visionary, long-term things.

There was certainly humour in mentioning Jack Layton because I was chair of the Big City Mayors' Caucus. After we did the five-cent-a-litre gas tax transfer to municipalities, he worked with Steve Harper to bring that down, so we lost our national transportation strategy, our national child care strategy and our national infrastructure strategy. I really wish sometimes that people in your federal party actually dreamed a little beyond that because that wasn't the practice at the time. We ended up with a situation right now where the federal government's spend annually in Ontario is \$800 million for the gas tax flow-through to cities which I and a few others negotiated about a decade ago. We've always counted that as municipal money.

The federal government's funding next year for infrastructure is \$73 million. That's the entire amount of money coming into Ontario, net: \$73 million. What will Ontario spend? We will spend \$14 billion. The provincial government, for 30 years, and this is not a political shot—under Liberals, Conservatives and New Democrats—only spent 0.25%, less than \$3 billion. We're now at \$14 billion. This is the first government since the 1970s to do that. The federal government won't even spend \$1 billion annually in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm going to try to talk fast so I can get a few words in today.

It's always a pleasure to rise and speak to my colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton. I find my colleague to be very balanced and fair, and at times he actually thinks like a fiscal Conservative. Now, he drifted off a little bit on those P3s. I'd like to offer an example of Bruce Power versus wind turbines. There's a P3 that is actually doing very well for our province, providing a significant portion of our reliable, clean power supply. So I'd like him to look at that and consider it when he does.

He talked a little bit, in some of his comments, about risk. Again, I'd like him, when he goes to step up the next time for the budget, to think about the record deficit and the record debt that that party opposite has created in the last two budgets that, unfortunately, they—some of them, all of them—have supported.

He does ask questions about rural Ontario. He often grabs me in the back halls and we have chats about different things. I do believe he's actually trying to understand and find a balanced way to look at what we need. I would ask him that he try, wherever he can, to help support the significant allotment of funding to projects such as the marine emergency program for Owen Sound, dredging of the Owen Sound harbour.

He talked about the Prince Edward Viaduct and how long it has been. Well, that's like our Markdale hospital, which this government again made a promise on and we're still waiting for. They've had a couple shovel turnings, sod turnings, and we're still waiting. People there are starting to lose hope and faith.

I talked earlier in my comments about the Wiarton Keppel airport, which needs a new runway, to ensure that it's there—and the broadband.

The minister actually just talked about gas tax. He was talking, I think, more at the federal level, but they now have the opportunity, considering that that private member's bill by my colleague Mr. Yakabuski has been approved. We hope that comes to rural Ontario as well because that will help address a lot of these infrastructure needs in places like Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

The minister talked about long-term sustainable—again, if he would put money into things like I just referenced from my riding, and all my colleagues will have similar needs, that will ensure that we have hope and sustainability and that we have a province that we once are proud to be part of.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: My colleagues talked about the P3s. In the Niagara Falls riding, during the by-election, it was talked about that the Liberal government, on a P3, put \$26.2 million into the planning. The question becomes, are we going to have the dialogue around, should it be a P3 or should it be a public hospital? When you take a look at the P3 just down the road in St. Catharines, where they built a new hospital, it ended up costing \$1 billion to build the new hospital. They ended up also having a contract with the company to run the hospital at a cost of \$700 million, which is another \$25 million per year to run that hospital. So the question becomes, is that the way to go, when you might have been able to build it cheaper?

1740

Now, if you take a look at the Peterborough hospital in Ontario, which was built, again, with public funds, it was around \$300 million.

Hon. Jeff Leal: That's my hospital.

Mr. Wayne Gates: And you would probably know exactly how many beds they had, but I know that it was well over 300 beds. It actually has, in Peterborough, more beds than we have in St. Catharines. So there is a question around exactly what you're talking about. Is it smart to build a P3 if it's going to cost taxpayers more money, deliver fewer beds and actually deliver less health care? At the end of the day, instead of that \$700 million going into a corporation's pocket to run the hospital and to give it to their shareholders, they could actually take that \$700 million and give it to front-line-care nurses and front-line-care doctors. That's the debate that has to happen. So I'm hoping that in the new Niagara Falls hospital, we have that debate with the \$26.2 million. Let's find out exactly how we should fund that hospital. Should it be publicly funded or a P3? I'm looking forward to that debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm delighted that my friend from Niagara Falls just happened to mention the Peterborough hospital. I would just like to give a plug to my good friend Ken Tremblay, the president and CEO, and the hard-working men and women, right from the top to the bottom, who do such an outstanding job each and every

day to provide quality health care not only in the city of Peterborough, but in the county of Peterborough and well beyond the Peterborough area.

In fact, just last week there was a ranking of ERs across the province of Ontario, and the Peterborough ER at PRHC just moved up tremendously in the ranking of providing great service under the folks there. I had the opportunity just once to be there in the ER, and the care was second to none.

But I have to get back to my good friend the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton. One of the things that we've been working on in the last few years is to provide dollars to municipalities right across Ontario to do their asset management plan, and that is a great tool. I know that communities in your riding, Mr. Speaker, took those dollars from the provincial government to develop those asset management plans.

For people who are watching, perhaps, in Fergus right now, they took those dollars to develop the asset management plan, which is a real reflection of infrastructure priorities in those communities, and they used that as a planning tool. As dollars come about from both the government of Canada and the province of Ontario, they'll be able to go through that inventory, as established by that asset management plan, to do roads, to do bridges, to do waste water treatment plants.

My colleague the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure was a real champion to make sure that those asset management plans were put in place. As a former city councillor in Peterborough for 18 years, from 1985 until the fall of 2003, I know how important it is for asset management plans to deal with those infrastructure issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We return to the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton for his two-minute response.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I should start with the member from Peterborough's comments. It's a great example of how much better a publicly funded option is than a P3. I think that perhaps the member from Peterborough can use that and perhaps convince the rest of the members in his caucus to consider looking at the benefits and merits of a publicly funded hospital, as opposed to a P3.

I just have to spend a couple of minutes—I only have a couple of minutes, so a couple of seconds—addressing the Minister of Transportation. I think his comments initially started off quite positive, with the viaduct, but the problem is that he opens himself up to a great deal of criticism when he looks to criticize the leader of the third party when he sits in a government that's been in power for over 10 years with a dismal track record on transit, child care and a great number of issues. I think it's a bit troublesome to—the proverb that we often use—throw stones in a glass house, particularly when your house is so fragile. I think that it's somewhat questionable in terms of a strategy.

I thank the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for drawing attention to the Bruce Power example. I think that there are a lot of problems with the concept of

nuclear energy in general given the fact that the costs for refurbishment are so unpredictable and so costly. That is something we really need to look at and whether or not we actually need to be investing further into nuclear power when it's not the most economically feasible or advisable option. We have to have a serious assessment of its cost-versus-benefit ratio, and I think that in a lot of regards, nuclear power has certain pitfalls and problems that we need to look at.

I've got to thank the member from Niagara Falls for drawing attention to a current P3-versus-publicly-funded question and dilemma. I hope we look at that very seriously when we look at building the new hospital because there are a lot of merits to the publicly funded model and a lot of problems with the P3 model.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I listened with great intent here this afternoon during the discussion of Bill 141. This is, again, very typical of this Liberal government, bringing forth legislation that actually has not a lot of substance or content to it.

If you'll indulge me, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go through a few of the segments of the bill and just outline to the people of Ontario out there some of the concerns that I myself see with some of the language that's being used and some of the points that this bill brings forward.

It says here, "Infrastructure planning principles." What this government is proposing is bringing forth a framework, if you will, of principles that would look at long-term investment and infrastructure. Well, this government has been in power for 10 years now, and I would like to say it's been the decade of debt and some might say—I can't use the word "deceit," can I, Mr. Speaker? So I won't use that word—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask you to withdraw it.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I withdraw that, Mr. Speaker. I'll withdraw "deceit."

It says here in section 3, under "Principles," "Infrastructure planning and investment should take a long-term view"—we agree—"and decision-makers should take into account the needs of Ontarians...." Well, this is something that this government seems to have not brought forward in most cases in the last decade that they've been at the helm. It says here that it should take into consideration "demographic and economic trends in Ontario."

Mr. Speaker, I come from the great riding of Northumberland-Quinte West. Of course, you are well-studied and learned in the fact that my riding is one of the most aged ridings not only in Ontario, but all of Canada. One of the things I have been pushing the Minister of Health on has been the fact that funding for health care and the services provided for certain elderly demographics in my riding need to be addressed. We're seeing some massive shortfalls in that funding to my riding, but I'll get to that a little later.

I do want to point out that it says here, "Infrastructure planning and investment should ensure the continued

provision of core public services, such as health care and education.” I concur. Who in this chamber, regardless of political party, doesn’t think that health care and education should be a priority? But what we have seen over the last decade of this government’s reckless spending and scandals is actually having a detrimental impact on our ability as a government to fund health care and education.

This government spends \$2 million an hour to service the debt they’ve created. They’ve doubled the debt in 10 years. Imagine for a moment, if you will, what \$2 million an hour could do for education and health care, for the young pages who are sitting here this afternoon. That’s taking money out of their education system, and it’s doing a great disservice for them. It’s taking money out of health care, and that’s doing a great disservice for the people of Northumberland–Quinte West.

1750

I have grave concerns over this, because that \$2 million an hour that this government is spending to service the debt that they’ve created can go into health care and education. In a 24-hour period, that’s \$48 million. That’s almost a brand new school a day that you could build throughout the province.

It’s obviously a priority for ourselves here as the Progressive Conservatives to ensure that these services are protected, but first we have to get our fiscal House in order, and it has to start by getting rid of this Liberal government.

I have to acknowledge the great work of a former member here, Dr. Doug Galt. Dr. Doug Galt actually fought for the new hospital in Cobourg, the Northumberland Hills Hospital, so every time I hear, coming from the government side, that Tories don’t care about health care or Tories don’t care about education, as a former high school teacher, I take personal offence to these charges by this government who are reckless and scandal-plagued.

The other part here says, “Infrastructure planning and investment should be evidence-based”—that makes sense; you don’t build bridges where you don’t need bridges, so it has to be evidence-based. But here’s the key—“and transparent.” Now, this word, by definition, is a term I think this government is lacking. We’ve seen this with the gas scandals that have taken place. They haven’t been transparent. It was only under the due diligence of the fine member from Cambridge, who brought forward the OPP investigation that’s currently going on with this government. They redacted tens of thousands of documents. They deleted emails. So “transparency” or “transparent” are terms that this government is not familiar with.

But let me say this: Our PC caucus, under Tim Hudak, has been very transparent, very open, and that’s the kind of government you’re going to get when Tim Hudak is the Premier of this province.

It also goes on to say that “investment decisions respecting infrastructure should be made on the basis of information that is either publicly available or is made

available to the public.” Again, following up on the transparency aspect of this, we are going to ensure that this actually, moving forward any kind of policy that a Tim Hudak government brings forward, is going to be transparent and open. I think that’s what our people back home expect from their elected representatives.

It’s interesting to note as I go a little further down the bill, it says, “(ii) municipal water sustainability plans submitted under the Water Opportunities Act, 2010,

“(iii) the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan established”—they’re talking about water and respect. It says here, “Infrastructure planning and investment should minimize the impact of infrastructure on the environment and respect and help maintain ecological and biological diversity, and infrastructure should be designed to be resilient to the effects of climate change.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, lo and behold, here we have a government, under the Green Energy Act, that was putting up industrial wind turbines in ecologically sensitive areas. The Oak Ridges moraine, is the great aquifer, the largest aquifer of fresh water for not just Ontario, but the largest aquifer in North America, and this government actually goes against its own policies of protecting not only the endangered species and the habitat on the Oak Ridges moraine, but they go ahead and do it without the consent of willing host municipalities. The member from Huron–Bruce—I have to commend her. She’s done a fantastic job in bringing this issue forward, because it’s not only on the Oak Ridges moraine, back in my riding where the Oak Ridges moraine lies, but it’s throughout the province of Ontario.

So this government, when I sit here in the House and they bring forward a piece of legislation like this, I have to ask myself, can I and the people of Northumberland–Quinte West trust this Liberal government to stand up and actually do what’s right and do what the will of the people is? Because we’re here as elected officials to represent our constituents and the best interests of our constituents and Ontario as a whole.

I understand sometimes that there has to be certain policies that are brought forward that aren’t necessarily conducive or very well received, if you will, from certain jurisdictions. But as the whole of the province, we have to ensure that this kind of policy that the Liberals are bringing forward—I can’t trust them, Mr. Speaker. I can’t stress that enough.

The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton made a very astute observation. He talked about the subways and the foresight back in 1913. Kudos to you. I would also interject and say that there was a great Premier, a visionary, if you will, Mr. Leslie Frost, from the Lindsay area, who actually had the foresight to develop the 401. Speaking to my grandparents and my parents, they recall, as young children, before the 401 was even there, looking and seeing—and people in the Toronto area at the time were saying, “My goodness, what is this lunatic doing building this massive road?”—what is now the 401—“way north of the city?” The Don Valley Parkway was not more than a cow path at the time, and he’s building this

massive infrastructure. That's the kind of visionary. Mr. Speaker, I know you traverse down the 401 corridor on a regular basis and you've been stuck in traffic on the Don Valley Parkway, so you understand and appreciate what kind of visionary leadership we need.

We're not getting this kind of visionary leadership from this Liberal government. I can honestly say that Tim Hudak has a vision for this province to bring it back on track economically and also socially to get us back to that great visionary that Leslie Frost brought to the province.

To that effect, I was in Wesleyville recently. Of course, Wesleyville is where that gas plant—well, it was an oil-based plant that never really opened, built in the 1970s. But I was there visiting, and there was a topographical map that showed you the 401. I think it was 1971, and there was about a five-mile stretch on the 401, and it actually—what I thought was quite interesting—I

counted the number of vehicles on the 401, and there were six vehicles on a five-mile stretch of the 401 back in 1970.

Mr. Rob Leone: Doesn't even happen at midnight.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: No, at midnight it's just packed.

We do need to talk about long-term infrastructure plans, and Tim Hudak is the man to do that, and the PC caucus is the caucus that's going to do that. I look forward to—I know you're looking at the time, Mr. Speaker, so I'll just leave it at that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Millroy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziatti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzdiecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzdiecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Regional centres for the developmentally disabled

Mr. Phil McNeely	5696
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	5697

Correction of record

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5697
-------------------------------	------

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS /
PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS**

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5697
Mr. Gilles Bisson	5697
Miss Monique Taylor	5697

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Municipalities

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	5697
----------------------------	------

Accident benefits

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5698
-------------------------	------

Parlement jeunesse francophone

M. Grant Crack	5698
----------------------	------

Bob Langstaff

Mr. Monte McNaughton	5698
----------------------------	------

Emergency preparedness

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5698
-----------------------	------

Strong Girls Strong Women symposium

Ms. Mitzie Hunter	5699
-------------------------	------

M. Sullivan and Son Ltd.

Mr. John Yakabuski	5699
--------------------------	------

Oakville Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5699
------------------------------	------

Lyme disease

Mr. Steve Clark	5699
-----------------------	------

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

Select Committee on Developmental Services

Report presented	5700
Mrs. Laura Albanese	5700

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI**

**YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford Act (Tax
Relief), 2014, Bill Pr28, Mr. Delaney**

First reading agreed to.....	5700
------------------------------	------

MOTIONS

Committee sittings

Hon. John Milloy	5700
Motion agreed to	5701

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Lyme disease

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	5701
----------------------------	------

Taxation

Ms. Laurie Scott	5701
------------------------	------

Use of digital technologies

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri	5701
-------------------------	------

Seniors' health services

Mr. Jim McDonell	5702
------------------------	------

Employment standards

Mr. Jonah Schein.....	5702
-----------------------	------

Ontario College of Trades

Mr. John Yakabuski	5702
--------------------------	------

Air quality

Mr. Todd Smith.....	5702
---------------------	------

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Mr. Rob E. Milligan	5703
---------------------------	------

Off-road vehicles

Mr. John Vanthof.....	5703
-----------------------	------

Workplace insurance

Mr. Bill Walker	5703
-----------------------	------

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	5703
----------------------------	------

Markdale hospital

Mr. Bill Walker	5704
-----------------------	------

Lyme disease

Mr. Todd Smith.....	5704
---------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

**Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2014,
Bill 141, Mr. Murray / Loi de 2014 sur
l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la
prosperité, projet de loi 141, M. Murray**

Mr. Wayne Gates	5705
Mr. John Fraser	5707
Mr. John Yakabuski	5708
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	5708
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri.....	5708
Mr. Wayne Gates	5709
Mr. Bill Walker	5709
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5713
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri.....	5713
Mr. Rob E. Milligan	5714

Hon. Jeff Leal	5714
Mr. Bill Walker.....	5714
Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	5715
Hon. Glen R. Murray	5717
Mr. Bill Walker.....	5718
Mr. Wayne Gates	5718
Hon. Jeff Leal	5718
Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	5719
Mr. Rob E. Milligan	5719
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	5721

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 5 March 2014 / Mercredi 5 mars 2014

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Complying with International Trade Obligations Act, 2014, Bill 153, Mr. Chiarelli / Loi de 2014 de conformité aux obligations commerciales internationales, projet de loi 153, M. Chiarelli	
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5675
Mr. Bob Delaney	5677
Mr. John Yakabuski	5678
Miss Monique Taylor	5678
Hon. Brad Duguid	5679
Mr. Rob E. Milligan	5679
Mr. Bob Delaney	5679
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5679
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5685

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop	5685
Mr. Percy Hatfield	5685
Mr. Bob Delaney	5685
Mr. Rob E. Milligan	5685
Mme France Gélinas	5685
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	5685
Mr. Robert Bailey	5685
M. Gilles Bisson	5685
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5685
Mr. Todd Smith	5686
Ms. Soo Wong	5686
Mr. Michael Prue	5686
Hon. Mario Sergio	5686
Hon. Charles Sousa	5686
Mr. Jonah Schein	5686
Ukrainian flag	
Mr. Todd Smith	5686
Hon. John Milloy	5686
Mr. Gilles Bisson	5686
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	5686
Mr. Todd Smith	5686
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	5686

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Student achievement	
Mr. Rob Leone	5687
Hon. Liz Sandals	5687

Pan Am Games

Mr. Rod Jackson	5688
Hon. Charles Sousa	5688

Hydro rates

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5689
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5689
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5689

Hydro rates

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5689
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5690
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5690

Health care

Mr. Jim Wilson	5690
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5690

Hydro rates

Mr. Gilles Bisson	5691
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5691

Public transit

Ms. Dipika Damerla	5691
Hon. Glen R. Murray	5691

Apprenticeship training

Mr. Garfield Dunlop	5692
Hon. Brad Duguid	5692

Pan Am Games

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5692
Hon. Charles Sousa	5693
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5693

Municipalities

Mr. Grant Crack	5693
Hon. Linda Jeffrey	5693

Renewable energy

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	5694
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5694

Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre

Ms. Peggy Sattler	5694
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5694

Senior citizens

Mr. Shafiq Qadri	5695
Hon. Mario Sergio	5695

Volunteer firefighters

Mr. Michael Harris	5695
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5696

Health care

Mme France Gélinas	5696
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5696

Continued on inside back cover

CAZON
X1
D23



No. 111

N° 111

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 6 March 2014

Jeudi 6 mars 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 6 March 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 6 mars 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENHANCING PATIENT CARE AND PHARMACY SAFETY (STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT) ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT DES LOIS AFIN D'AMÉLIORER LES SOINS AUX MALADES ET LA SÉCURITÉ DES PHARMACIES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 21, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 117, An Act to amend certain statutes with respect to the regulation of pharmacies and other matters concerning regulated health professions / *Projet de loi 117, Loi visant à modifier certaines lois en ce qui concerne la réglementation des pharmacies et d'autres questions relatives aux professions de la santé réglementées.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am very pleased to have the opportunity to resume the debate on Bill 117, the drug and pharmacies regulation act, which was actually introduced last October—October 10, 2013. My colleague Mr. Yurek, who is the member from Middlesex—the St. Thomas area; I can't remember the name exactly—did the leadoff for us on October 22, 2013. Being a pharmacist himself, he was an invaluable resource to us as we reviewed this bill as a caucus, and we are certainly prepared to support this bill.

I think the last time it was spoken to was November 21, when Madame Gélinas, from the third party, did her leadoff as well. I think it's important to note that there have been several responses to what happened.

I think that, before I go through the debate, I'd like to just indicate what led to the introduction of Bill 117 and why we're dealing with it here and now. It arose from a tragic case of underdosing with respect to two chemotherapy drugs, gemcitabine and cyclophosphamide, which took place between February 2012 and March 2013 at four Ontario hospitals, in addition to a hospital in New Brunswick. The four affected hospitals were the Windsor

Regional Hospital, the London Health Sciences Centre, Lakeridge Health and the Peterborough Regional Health Centre.

It wasn't until March 2013 that the error was discovered: The chemo drugs had been diluted and had affected almost 1,200 patients across the province of Ontario, and it was discovered that an error had been made. At that point, I would say that all officials acted quickly, and I would like to commend the Minister of Health for taking quick action in this and for appointing Dr. Jake Thiessen, who is a well-known expert in the area of pharmacy, to conduct an investigation into what went wrong so that we can make sure such an event never happens again.

Dr. Thiessen did a thorough examination and issued his report in July 2013. It was a very timely response, and he came up with a number of recommendations but concluded essentially that, "The problem boiled down to gaps in communication and its unintended consequences." What happened? How did we end up with so many people receiving diluted chemotherapy drugs? We'll never really know the consequences of it, whether people were adversely affected—some people have passed away since then. Whether they died because of that we'll never know, but we owe it to those patients and their families to conduct a thorough investigation, and that has been done.

Dr. Thiessen's report is very thorough, but I would also like to indicate to people who may be watching this debate this morning that the social policy committee has also undertaken a very extensive review. We also called witnesses; heard testimony from a variety of individuals and organizations involved. We will be issuing a report in the next short while. While I can't speak to the specifics of that, because it hasn't been made public yet, I want to assure the public that we have taken that very, very seriously, and we have examined it to the extent to which we can as legislators.

I think when you take a look to see what actually happened, we have to look at the circumstances around the purchasing of these drugs. What we now have in the province of Ontario are organizations known as group purchasing organizations, which act on behalf of hospitals in order to get better volume discounts for the drugs that are purchased. In order to contract these services, the group purchasing organizations issue tenders for certain drugs. In this case, it was admixtures of chemotherapy drugs, which are drugs that have to be mixed with saline in order to be used. A lot of the hospitals are contracting this out because it saves time.

It's something that can be readily used by pharmacy staff, and it's fairly commonplace that this has been done.

The group purchasing organization here—in this case it was called Medbuy—put out the tender for these two admixtures for these two chemotherapy drugs. They hired a group of 11 pharmacists to review the tender, and three different companies submitted bids. Ultimately, the bid from Marchese Hospital Solutions was selected. It was a different company that had had the previous tender. I think this is where there was a fundamental mistake that was made. The previous company had made concentration-specific admixtures; in other words, they could be used in the form that they appeared and could be administered to patients requiring chemotherapy solutions. It's commonly known, though, that generally speaking, these compounds are overfilled. So in many circumstances they may be filled to 107 millilitres rather than 100 millilitres. They're not concentration-specific, so they would have to be specifically measured for use by each patient. There was a fundamental misunderstanding here between Medbuy and Marchese as to whether the entire bag of concentrated solution was going to be used for one patient or whether it was going to be used for a number of patients.

Generally speaking, I understand that there is a great variety in the amounts that can be administered to any one person. It wouldn't generally be common to use one full bag for each person, because the amount of medication or chemotherapy drug that each person would require would depend upon their height, weight and so on and various other circumstances. But that wasn't the case for the solutions that were prepared by Marchese Hospital Solutions. They understood that they were responding exactly to the tender that had been put out by Medbuy, and Medbuy understood that they were producing the solutions in the same way that the previous contractor had done. As a result, people were given these overfilled bags, and that's how the underdosing happened.

It wasn't until some of the front-line workers at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre discovered this problem in March 2013 that this whole matter came to light. As it happened, they had just recently run out of their supply of bags from the previous vendor, and they noticed that the label on the new IV bag from Marchese wasn't labelled in the same way that previous solutions had been, and they were concerned about how they should be administering this drug. So they were the ones that raised the alarm bells, and they were the ones that brought it to the attention of the authorities in the first place, and action was taken after that.

In his report, Dr. Thiessen took a look at a number of things. I'd just like to take a look at what his actual mandate was, before I go any further. His mandate was three things: first of all, to conduct a review to determine the causes of recently discovered instances of underdosing of chemotherapy drugs at Windsor Regional Hospital, London Health Sciences Centre, Lakeridge Health and Peterborough Regional Health Centre; secondly, to

provide recommendations to prevent future incidents of this nature; and, third, to provide a report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care no later than July 12, 2013. Dr. Thiessen certainly did that.

0910

Dr. Thiessen did come forward with a total of 12 recommendations, one of which is the subject of Bill 117, which gives the Ontario College of Pharmacists authority over hospital pharmacies in addition to community pharmacies. This is an important first step. As I said before, we are certainly prepared to agree with this and to vote in favour of Bill 117. But I think it's important to note that there were 11 other, equally important recommendations that weren't followed, which I'll get to in a moment. In the sense of what we have here, giving the Ontario College of Pharmacists jurisdiction over hospital pharmacies, I think, completes the picture and makes sure that patient safety is going to be given paramount consideration.

The other aspects of the bill: It puts in measures intended to enhance the system's ability to prevent one or more events that can jeopardize patient care and safety. It appoints a contact person, at every hospital with a pharmacy, whose job is to facilitate communication with the Ontario College of Pharmacists. We know that that was an issue in this case, and this makes a lot of sense.

Secondly, the bill also allows health regulatory colleges to share information with public health authorities and with public hospitals. Finally, the bill would also enable regulatory colleges to provide a faster response to complaints. So now the OCP, Ontario College of Pharmacists, can accredit, inspect and enforce hospital pharmacies' operations as well as make regulations and bylaws to establish the standards and requirements for accreditation and inspection.

It's great as far as it goes, but there are several other issues that Dr. Thiessen reported on that I would just like to spend a few minutes speaking about.

His first recommendation was: "Notwithstanding the underdosing incident, the continued use of group purchasing organizations ... to negotiate vendor product preparation pharmaceutical services shall not be discouraged. However, improvements are needed in the GPO-based processes." We would certainly agree with that. I think it's fair to say, without divulging anything specific, that that was something that the social policy committee did take a serious look at and will have some recommendations concerning.

Secondly: "Every GPO shall review its procurement process to ensure that risk for patients is considered an essential evaluation and adjudication criterion when considering proposals." Again, this is just, I think, a matter of common sense, that patient safety has to be the paramount consideration. Of course, price is an important consideration, and we need to make sure that we get good value for every taxpayer dollar that is spent in health care, but the paramount consideration must always be patient safety.

The third recommendation was: "Every GPO shall develop and adopt a standardized product and/or service

specification description that outlines the requirements for contracted sterile or non-sterile pharmaceutical product services.” I think this really gets to the crux of the matter here: That fundamental misunderstanding between Medbuy, as the group purchasing organization, and Marchese Hospital Solutions about what type of solution was to be prepared—whether it was to be used for single patient use or whether it was concentration-specific and could be used for a number of patients—really led to the tragic circumstances that we’re faced with. Had that not been a question, arguably the events that transpired probably would not have.

The fourth recommendation: “Annually in January, each GPO shall publicize information regarding the contracted pharmaceutical services provided by all its vendors.” Again, this is aimed at transparency and accountability, just knowing what has been contracted and what is being prepared in-house. We want to make sure that the pharmacies are going to be able to operate as efficiently as possible, but certainly it is also possible that not every service provided by a pharmacy should be contracted out.

Recommendation number 5: “Marchese Hospital Solutions ... shall review and revise its product preparation processes to ensure that all its products meet the specifications required by professionals in treating patients effectively and safely.” We want to make sure that at every step along the line, all of the parties that are involved in preparing these types of solutions, whether they’re in the hospital pharmacies or whether they’re contracted out through the group purchasing organizations to another provider, make sure that patient safety is in place and that the proper processes to ensure that are in place all along the way.

Recommendation number 6: “The Ontario College of Pharmacists ... (and by extension, the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities ...) shall work quickly with Health Canada to define best practices and contemporary objective standards for non-sterile and sterile product preparation within a licensed pharmacy.” We need to make sure, again, anywhere, that we’re dealing with these types of products, whether they are non-sterile or sterile—that it’s organized and coordinated, both federally and provincially. Of course, there is a role to play by Health Canada as well.

Recommendation number 7: The OCP “shall stipulate specialized electronic material records and label requirements for non-sterile and sterile product preparation within a licensed pharmacy.” Again, the labelling issue was a significant issue that was spoken about both by Dr. Thiessen as well as in the social policy committee. I think it’s of note that though this preparation had been used for some time in some of the other hospital facilities, it was really only the front-line workers at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre’s cancer centre who were the ones that noticed the discrepancy.

I think there is some confusion out there as to appropriate labelling. We need to have standardized labelling to make sure that anybody who’s working with these

preparations, whether it’s the pharmacist, the pharmacy technician or anyone else, knows exactly how the preparations are going to be used.

Recommendation 9: The OCP—the Ontario College of Pharmacists—“shall specify credentials beyond education and licensing for personnel engaged in non-sterile and sterile product preparation practices within a licensed pharmacy.” Again, it’s just making sure that everyone who is within the hospital pharmacy system—because this is a new thing for the Ontario College of Pharmacists—is reviewed to make sure that they all have the appropriate credentials, because they are working with medications that can allow someone to live or die if they’re not used appropriately.

Recommendation number 10: “Health Canada shall license all enterprises that function beyond the product preparation permitted within a licensed pharmacy; that is, all product preparation enterprises not within a licensed pharmacy shall be licensed” by Health Canada.

Here, there was a discrepancy between what is considered to be a pharmacy and what is considered to be a manufacturing facility. The Ontario College of Pharmacists has jurisdiction over the former; Health Canada has jurisdiction over the latter. But unfortunately, the situation here with Marchese Hospitals Solutions fell into a grey area, sort of a no man’s land, where nobody really knew who had jurisdiction, and as a result, it fell through the cracks.

I think it should be said that Marchese Hospital Solutions was very proactive in this matter. They did actively seek to find out who had regulatory authority over them and they weren’t given a complete response at the time; so as a matter of fact, this issue of regulation fell between the cracks. It is something that needs to be clearly defined, as to what a pharmacy is and what a manufacturing facility is so that the appropriate jurisdictions know in the future who is going to be responsible for these entities.

Recommendation number 11: “The Ontario Hospital Association ... shall conduct a formal review/audit to determine the efficiency and traceability of computer-based clinic and hospital records for patients and their treatments, and report the findings to the” Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. That’s an interesting one, because I think part of the problem here is that we don’t have an ongoing, up-and-running system of electronic medical records here in the province of Ontario.

0920

While I don’t think one can say that if we had them, it would have prevented this chemotherapy underdosing incident, it certainly would be helpful, within the hospitals, to be able to have a functioning system to track medications for patients; to make sure that there are not toxic interactions; to make sure that people are being dosed at appropriate levels; to make sure that physicians and other health care providers can have the appropriate information at their fingertips to know whether patients are receiving toxic doses, toxic mixtures and so on.

I think that it’s fine to tell the Ontario Hospital Association to conduct this audit, but in all fairness, I

believe they need to have the tools in hospitals in order to be able to carry out their business efficiently and to maintain, over and above all of that, patient safety.

Then the last recommendation, of course, was recommendation number 12: "The Ontario College of Pharmacists shall license all pharmacies operating within Ontario's clinics or hospitals."

Dr. Thiessen concluded: "This review has uncovered the cause of the oncology underdosing. The recommendations are intended to prevent future oncology incidents of this nature and to mitigate identifiable risks in the broader realm of non-sterile and sterile product preparation within licensed pharmacies and other enterprises."

Again, in conclusion, I would say it is commendable that the government has brought forward Bill 117, but because it only deals with one of the 12 recommendations made by Dr. Thiessen, I would certainly urge the government to move forward with the rest of the recommendations and to give a good, hard look at the social policy committee's report when it is issued. It contains some additional recommendations that we hope will be helpful in making sure that such a situation never happens again.

Nobody wants to have this sort of thing hanging over their head. A diagnosis of cancer is difficult enough, but to never know whether you received the right dosage—and for those families who may have lost loved ones, for them to never know—had they not received the underdosing; had they received the appropriate level—whether this might never have happened.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak this morning on this, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to be able to rise in this House and comment on the remarks by the member from Whitby—Oshawa regarding Bill 117, Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act. Her remarks were very well thought out.

This is such a personal and tragic issue, because the people who received the mis-dosed chemotherapy drugs—their lives are on the line. They gave their trust to our medical system that they were diagnosed and that the treatments would be the best available to treat their affliction. Their trust was shattered by mistakes made in our system. This bill is meant to address that, and it takes into account some of the recommendations that Dr. Thiessen made.

We are concerned that the bill was brought forward before the social policy committee had a real chance to look at the overview of the whole situation. We hope, as this bill goes forward, that it will take into account the recommendations, because these recommendations are still not out.

We are very confident that, hopefully, we can regain the public's trust by implementing measures that will stop this from happening again, because, as I've said before, the people's trust has been broken. People's lives have been shattered. Lives might have been lost from this

mistake. It is our duty to do everything in our power to make sure that mistakes like this don't happen again.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to speak today on Bill 117, the Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act.

As a former nurse myself, I cannot imagine how the health professionals and the patients who discovered that patients had received the wrong dosage, and also the health care providers who have given the wrong dosage without knowing about it—just imagine: You're a patient, and you are suffering from cancer. You put your life into the hands of a professional you believe very highly in, and then you discover later on that you were not given the proper treatment. I cannot imagine, because I have friends and colleagues who have suffered from cancer. Right now they are under treatment.

I'm very pleased that the minister reacted so quickly and asked Dr. Thiessen to look into and to bring about a recommendation that will hopefully prevent such an incident from happening again. I want to also thank the health professional who reacted so quickly and recognized that there was something wrong with what she was prepared to give to one of her patients. It shows that we have very conscientious and very good health professionals out there who want nothing but the best care for their own patients.

We have accepted and endorsed all 12 recommendations from Dr. Thiessen. I hope that we will all help to speed up the approval of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened closely and attentively to the member from Whitby—Oshawa, our critic of health. Back in October 2013, I think our lead speaker was Jeff Yurek, the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London, a pharmacist. Ms. Elliott outlined the 12 recommendations in the Thiessen report.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to stick to riding names and not personal names.

Mr. John O'Toole: Okay. I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker.

The bill itself is not particularly large. It has 19 different sections to it. It's only four pages in English and four in French. As has been said by the member from Whitby—Oshawa, it really only deals with one of the recommendations.

In fact, it's important to put on the record that patient safety being put at risk—especially families when they have the greatest trust, as has been said by many members—we have to get it right. It's unfortunate. I think it was discovered at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre; one of the persons in the pharmacy in the hospital, I gather, realized that there was underdosing. It's very troubling, in that confidence in the health care system is paramount when you discuss it.

Section number three of the bill and act is amended by adding a section saying that where drug compounding or

dispensing of supplies in a hospital, by hospitals and on the premise of the hospital, it's considered to be a pharmacy. That, perhaps, as has been said, is one of the loopholes.

Another section very specifically: If a person resigns from the profession, there's a duty to report it within 30 days to the college. So hopefully this will correct the problem and re-establish the confidence in our health care system, which is badly shaken at this point in time in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I want to congratulate the member from Whitby–Oshawa for her speech this morning that basically gives a very accurate description as to what has happened so far. I also want to support my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who really focused on the effect that this has had on the 1,202 people who were affected by the diluted chemo drugs.

Now, my comments are disappointment. We have a committee of the Legislature that has spent an entire year looking at where the mistake happened, why the mistake happened, why it was not detected, what the mechanisms were in place that failed so that we did not pick up this error before this product was actually used to offer chemotherapy treatment to all of those people.

0930

I'm quite proud of the work that the committee has done. We are coming forward with recommendations that I feel will assure the people of Ontario that what went wrong will never happen again, and if something of the sort was to happen, the mechanism in place will catch the problem way, way before it even reaches close to the bedside.

The bill has been brought forward before the work of the committee has been made public. The problem is that the recommendations of the committee are substantive, will need legislation, and yet this bill came before the work was done. There is a disconnect there that can only be detrimental to the trust that those people have lost in our health care system.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Whitby–Oshawa, you have two minutes.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to thank all of the members who have commented this morning. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane spoke about the public trust being broken, and I think that is fundamental to this whole discussion because people do put themselves in the hands of health care professionals when they're sick. A cancer diagnosis is terrifying, and they absolutely trust the health professionals to do the right thing for them—which of course they intended to do here, but there was this breakdown that absolutely needs to be fixed, if we can go about regaining public trust in the system. We owe that to the people affected and their families.

The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services also congratulated the health professionals for bringing this matter to light and for taking such quick action. I can only imagine the people in Peterborough

who were pharmacy assistants and technicians who brought this forward. It must have been a very difficult thing for them to do. They showed a lot of courage in bringing this forward, and I thank them as well.

The member from Durham talked about the need to enact the rest of the recommendations. I would certainly agree with that. The minister indicated that the government has endorsed all 12 recommendations. We certainly hope that we'll be able to move forward with them.

Finally, the member from Nickel Belt has been my colleague on the social policy committee, and I agree with her: We have spent a lot of time in analyzing the information we've received from the various witnesses. We do have a report that is quite substantive that is going to be coming forward. But I would really like to commend her in particular for her excellent work on this. I would say she, more than anybody else in the committee, has put countless hours into this, using her knowledge as a health care professional. I would really like to commend her for her dedication to this, because I think that the work that is going to come out as a result of the committee working together owes a lot to the work that she's done.

I thank everybody for the comments. I think we're all aligned in wanting to protect patient safety and move this bill forward, but let's not forget the rest of the recommendations that have to come forward, too.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. Indeed, I welcome the opportunity to stand in the House today to speak to Bill 117, the Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act, 2013. As you know, this was first introduced back on the 10th of October last year. It's an Act to amend certain statutes with respect to the regulation of pharmacies and other matters concerning regulated health professions.

By way of official explanation, the government wishes to amend the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act, the Public Hospitals Act, as well as the Regulated Health Professions Act. For the most part, we're discussing this because, as we all know, for close to a year, more than 1,200 cancer patients at five hospitals received doses of chemotherapy drugs that were weaker than caregivers realized.

We know that this bill is a direct response to recommendations made by Dr. Jake Thiessen's report on chemotherapy underdosing. Dr. Jake Thiessen is a pharmacy expert, and he was appointed to conduct an independent review of Ontario's cancer drug supply chain. Four of those hospitals were in Ontario; the other one was in New Brunswick. One of the four hospitals was in my community of Windsor, and 290 patients from Windsor–Essex county were among the 1,200 who didn't get what they were supposed to be given. Many of those patients were constituents of mine and also of my colleague, the member from Essex, of course, as well as the member from Windsor West.

First, allow me to thank the three sharp-eyed pharmacy assistants in Peterborough who discovered the

problem within a couple of hours of cracking open their first batch of this weaker stuff. While the drugs were mistakenly allocated in Windsor and elsewhere, the three assistants in Peterborough couldn't figure out the specifics of the labelling on their first shipment of outsourced chemotherapy drugs from a new supplier. According to the Toronto Star, they asked for advice, and apparently a pharmacist from a regional cancer centre in Durham told them not to worry about it because the discrepancy in the recommended dosage was not considered to be clinically significant at first glance. One patient in Peterborough was given the diluted mixture, but because the pharmacy assistants there were used to working with intravenous drugs that clearly spelled out the total concentration of the drugs, the total volume of saline as well as the amount of active drug per millilitre of saline, they asked for another opinion, a second opinion, if you will, from another pharmacist. Thankfully, an hour and five minutes later, the entire supply was ordered quarantined.

That brings us to today, except to acknowledge—and in no way am I assigning blame—that 150 or more of the 1,200 patients who were administered the weaker, diluted drugs have died. Now, it's not known—I repeat, not known—what, if any, role the weakened mixture played in those deaths. I know, though, in the Windsor region, there is still a big cloud of uncertainty. Marlene Roy, who was having treatment for breast cancer—by the way, the drugs in question are used on a regular basis to help treat patients with cancers of the breast, ovaries and pancreas. But 60-year-old Marlene Roy was quoted in the Windsor Star, actually a week after I was elected in my by-election last August 1, discussing the impact of her—after receiving the diluted mixture, she said, “You're left wondering, did this cause my life to be shorter?” This is a huge question. When you get a medication that's weakened, over-diluted by 7% or 10% or more, what will be the short- and medium- and long-term effect of that underdosing? You talk about stress. Now on a daily basis, stress governs her life. Mrs. Roy told Brian Cross of the Windsor Star that she can't sleep at night now, because she's so troubled about all of this.

Another Windsor-area cancer patient, Diane Marley, whose husband, Ken, is a good friend of mine—he's a criminal defence lawyer in Windsor—says, when speaking of the report by Dr. Jake Thiessen, which led in part to this bill being introduced by the minister, that the report doesn't remove the big question of whether receiving the diluted drugs will affect her survival. But she says, “The only good that can come of it is if these recommendations are followed through and things really are tightened up.” I agree. I couldn't agree more with that statement.

So that's what's on the table. Will there be improvements to the system? Will there be protections for the patients? Shelley-ann Meloche is certainly hoping so. She was diagnosed with breast cancer last year. She has been riding on an emotional roller coaster ever since being told that she was given the diluted chemo drugs by mistake. She was quoted in that Windsor Star story as

saying, “You have a double mastectomy, you have months of healing and then they're putting ports in and giving chemo. You're just starting to feel better and this hits you.” Imagine, Mr. Speaker, imagine the shock, the uncertainty, the unknown, the fear. Shelley-ann Meloche adds, “And nothing anyone says is going to make you feel better.”

0940

The hospital where these patients were given the wrong doses was Windsor Regional. The hospital CEO was quoted as saying, “Everybody plays a part in fixing this. That includes Windsor Regional Hospital, hospitals across Ontario and Canada. Every entity plays a part.” Speaker, that includes this Legislature.

We have a role to play. This is a non-partisan issue. This is an issue that demands our attention and that we must take very seriously. We have to do what is right. We have to do our part to make sure nothing like this ever happens again. We have to make sure patients will not be asking themselves, “I wonder how much longer I would have lived if I hadn't experienced this situation.”

In order to not repeat these mistakes, we have to understand exactly what happened and put in place supervisory controls and oversight accountability. We need regulations and amendments, and we need to question how this came about so that we don't have another replay of this horrific story.

Dr. Thiessen found shortcomings at all levels of the drug chain. He didn't find any evidence of malicious or deliberate dilution of the drugs.

Speaker, mixing chemotherapy drugs with saline solution for intravenous use is time-consuming. It's potentially hazardous. We all know it's becoming increasingly common for hospitals to outsource the process to private companies operating with little regulation or oversight.

I must point out that our party's health critic, the member from Nickel Belt, has questioned why it took a public health crisis for the government to notice the dangers posed by gaps in oversight. Our health critic has pointed out that hospitals are outsourcing more and more services, from heart diagnostic testing to urology. The member from Nickel Belt questions whether proper oversight is in place across the entire health care system in Ontario.

It leaves us wondering, what else is out there? To date, no one involved in all of this has ever said, “It's my fault. I'm responsible.” Sure, people have apologized, but no one wants to accept the blame.

Let's go back for a moment and look at the chain of events. A middle man, if you will, Medbuy, put out a tender call for a non-concentration-specific drug mixture. But what should have been put out for bids was a tender for a concentration-specific mixture, which could have been customized for the individual user. That's where the blame begins.

Marchese gets the contract. This company, Marchese, the company that mixed the drugs, was not overseen by the College of Pharmacists. It was not under the direct supervision of Health Canada either. We know the for-

mer supplier had no problems. We know their bags were properly labelled and easily understood. We know there was a tender call and a new supplier chosen—a low bidder.

Some of us still find it troubling that this new supplier, Marchese Hospital Solutions, the company that mixed and supplied the intravenous bags of chemotherapy drugs—the drugs involved in this massive medication error—got the contract despite the fact it wasn't a licensed pharmacy or drug manufacturer. Where was the oversight?

Some of us still find it troubling that, despite recognizing the need for new regulations, the bill was drafted and introduced prior to the committee studying the issue and Dr. Thiessen's report, prior to the committee making its recommendation.

So what do we have in this bill? Well, there are provisions to allow the Ontario College of Pharmacists to accredit, inspect and enforce various measures of the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act in regard to hospital pharmacies, and those in our provincial institutions. These institutional pharmacies could be located in prisons or in long-term-care homes.

We'll have separate classes of certificates of accreditation. Hospitals will now have to report to a regulatory college when a member resigns and there is a reasonable ground to believe the resignation is related to a member's professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity. It makes you wonder, Speaker, why this hasn't been in place before now, but let me continue.

The changes will allow health colleges to share information with public health authorities when public health implications are suspected. It will be easier to appoint a supervisor to a medical college if it's deemed to be in the public interest.

In order not to waste the time of the people who are obligated to investigate complaints, it removes the obligation of a health college to investigate every complaint where it's believed by the registrar of that college that even if that allegation was proven, it would not constitute misconduct. Apparently, there are just too many complaints coming in that would be more in the class of neighbour-to-neighbour conflict and not based on medical misconduct.

The intent is to tighten up a lot of loose ends, and that is a good thing. What isn't necessarily a good thing is that the Standing Committee on Social Policy continues to look at the diluted chemotherapy drugs scandal, and this bill was drafted and introduced before members of that committee made their final recommendations.

I don't have a crystal ball, and I can't predict the future. But, Speaker, like you, I can guess this likely could mean that Bill 117 will only partially address the problems that led to this tragic error.

Earlier I referenced a story done by Brian Cross in the Windsor Star. Let me conclude by quoting once more from that story. Kate Warner is another cancer patient from the Windsor-Essex county area. When asked what she thought of Dr. Thiessen's report, she wasn't pleased,

Mr. Speaker. She said, "Somebody's got to step up and say, 'Yes, we're responsible for this and it won't happen again.'" She further added, "It sounds to me like [no one is] really accepting the blame, but they're still apologizing for it. I don't see that it's going to do us any good at all."

Speaker, this bill doesn't assign responsibility for what happened to more than 1,200 unsuspecting cancer patients. No one is stepping up and saying, "It's my fault." Medbuy hasn't explained how it could put out a call for a non-concentration-specific solution when what was needed was a concentration-specific mixture which could be customized, patient by patient.

For many patients—people such as Kate Warner—this bill is too little, too late. That's not to say it can't be improved upon, because, despite its many shortcomings, it does deserve support from all three parties. My party's health critic, the member from Nickel Belt, has recommended that we in the New Democratic Party support this legislation.

I, for one, certainly hope that what occurred with the diluted chemotherapy drugs scandal will never happen again. This bill will bring Ontario in line with other provinces, such as British Columbia, that already regulate hospital pharmacies, and I will be voting in favour of it.

Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker. It's always a privilege to stand in this chamber and provide input, and I never take my position here for granted. At times such as these, however, I wish there was more we could do. I wish we could get the responsible parties to admit their guilt, so that apologies would have a ring of truth and patients—those who survived—might finally be able to get a start on their road to closure.

What happened wasn't their fault. They put their faith into Ontario's medical system, Ontario's health care system. When it works, it's one of the best in the world, but it's not perfect. It can always be improved upon, and this is a start, Speaker, but there's still more that could be done.

When the Standing Committee on Social Policy concludes its hearings and makes its recommendations, perhaps that bill will be stronger and this never will happen again.

0950

Speaker, I hope I'm not breaking any confidences here, but I am of the understanding that the report from the standing committee will be released within the next three weeks or less.

To those who were affected directly: I have full confidence in the two New Democrats on that committee: the member from Nickel Belt and the member from Welland. They have been working to ensure nothing like this ever happens again and if there's any hint of it, it will be caught quickly, remedial action will be taken immediately, and we'll never get to the point where we have to have an investigation such as this.

We need to believe in our health care system. We need to believe again in our health care system. We put our faith in it. We take ourselves to the hospital or we send

our loved ones to the hospital, and we do so with full faith that the system is there to look after them, to take care of them and the treatment that they're given when they're in our hospital system and within the medical system is top-notch. We're paying good dollars, good money, for the best system. We deserve the best attention.

We can't have uncertainty, and this has caused a lot of uncertainty throughout the entire medical professions. It has caused people around the world to learn of it and to question how this can happen in Ontario, Canada. My friends in America look upon Canada and our health care system with envy. They can't believe our health care system is so affordable and so reliable. Then something like this happens and they say, "Ah, maybe it's not so good. Maybe we're better off where we are."

We do have the best system. It's proven time and time again. I do have faith in the system. I hope, after the committee makes its report, that the recommendations are followed through; that the ministry takes those recommendations and improves upon and implements them; that the system we end up with will once again send out a message that what has happened will never happen again and that we can all put our faith in the system, and that Ontario's health care system continues to be the very best in the world.

Thank you for your time, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to commend the member from Windsor-Tecumseh for his input into this bill.

Yes, in Ontario, we're very lucky. We have an excellent health care system. To have worked in the system for many years, and to have seen the improvement in treatment for patients who are suffering from cancer—it's just unbelievable.

Before, if you were diagnosed with cancer, there was one way to go. But now there is hope for people who are diagnosed with cancer, thanks to the investments that all Ontarians have made into the health care system, and thanks to the health professionals, those who have done research and all of those who, on a daily basis, work with patients with cancer.

We all hope that this incident will not happen again. That's why the minister did not wait for a report of a committee but took swift action to correct the situation. If the committee comes with good recommendations, I'm sure that she will listen to it and also take action.

Again, to these health professionals who get up every day to do good work, and to those who identified that something was wrong with the medications that they were about to send to the floor or to administer, I say thank you. Thank you. You have contributed to improving the health care system, and you have contributed also to helping these patients who did receive the wrong dosage to be looked at a second time by their health care professionals.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: It certainly gives me great pleasure to be able to take the next few moments to comment on the bill before us today.

I think all of us—as MPPs, as Ontarians—were shocked when we found that this, in fact, could take place. We're all vulnerable when we walk into a hospital, when we walk into a doctor's office. We have a sense of the professionalism that stands within those walls. Obviously, to a very large degree, that is well founded; I don't want to suggest anything otherwise. But just the very fact that something such as this could happen sends shock waves within the community. I think it demonstrates how good governance and oversight are always paramount, or should be.

I think that the discussions that the committee had on this topic again demonstrate the fact that people forgot how important it is to have a system of oversight that ensures that this doesn't happen. What we have in this piece of legislation is a directive, if you like, to be able to provide that kind of oversight.

But I want to just add a word of caution: It doesn't matter how many rules you write or how many pieces of legislation you have; it is always the responsibility of individuals who are charged with the responsibility of making sure things happen. What we see here is a breakdown in that sense of responsibility that has to be shared by everyone who's involved, whether it's making a safe car or providing chemotherapy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

M. Michael Mantha: C'est avec plaisir que je me lève avec des commentaires sur le projet de loi 117, la Loi visant à modifier certaines lois en ce qui concerne la réglementation des pharmacies et d'autres questions relatives aux professions de la santé réglementées.

Mon collègue de Windsor-Tecumseh a vraiment démontré et puis nous a donné le portrait et le visage des gens dans sa région qui ont été affectés par certaines décisions qui n'ont pas été prises, et de certaines actions des personnes qui ont fait le mélange des médicaments nécessaires pour le traitement du cancer qui n'ont pas été portées responsables. Tu vois avec ses commentaires comment ça a touché certaines personnes de sa communauté, le montant de frustration et de désespoir, on peut dire, qu'il y a eu dans la communauté, et puis comment ça a affecté les gens.

Mais dans ses commentaires, il a vraiment indiqué aussi qu'il faut qu'on mette notre focus et notre attention sur faire ce qu'on devrait faire en tant que personnes ici dans des positions de responsabilité, et puis d'agir et de faire certain qu'on mette les étapes et règlements nécessaires pour faire certain que ces situations-ci ne se représentent pas.

Je veux aussi donner un vraiment bon crédit à notre critique de Nickel Belt pour la santé et les soins de longue durée, une personne qui a vraiment allumé et emporté beaucoup d'attention. Sa ténacité sur le sujet et les commentaires qu'elle a aussi apportés, c'est de faire certain que les recommandations qui vont venir du com-

ité dans les deux, trois ou quatre prochaines semaines—qu'on fasse certain d'avoir une façon d'implémenter ces réglementations et recommandations-là dans le projet de loi. C'est de valeur que le projet de loi soit en devant nous comme il est, mais on espère voir du changement.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: It's important to comment on Bill 117 and the comments from the member from Windsor-Tecumseh. This is a matter of great importance.

I'm a member of the Standing Committee on Social Policy. I've been listening to the presentations for the last number of months, and I do concur. I think this committee is an example of the three parties coming together and working on this. The member from Whitby-Oshawa has been excellent. The member from Oak Ridges-Markham, Dr. Helena Jaczek, has been very, very involved in this. Also, France Gélinas has been excellent. So it's really an example of intelligent co-operation. Very decisive and penetrating questions have been asked.

1000

It just reminds us all that sometimes, when we look at our health care system and our ministry—I think it's the largest health ministry in North America. All the doctors, nurses, front-line people, lab technicians and everyone that supplies everything from the chemo drugs to all the other medications that are required—the immense responsibility we put on our health care workers, from our doctors down to our lab technicians. We can't take for granted for a minute—this is critically important work. It doesn't happen automatically. There have to be constant improvements, monitoring and supervision, because these things can happen. But we should appreciate the incredible responsibility they have—life-and-death responsibility—over our loved ones.

I think we owe it to them to thank the front-line workers that are doing this kind of thing for 13 million Ontarians every day, because without their dedication and professionalism, many, many health care issues would be tragic. Let's thank them for the work they do. Maybe this will help them do better work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Windsor-Tecumseh, you have two minutes.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, and to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the minister responsible for francophone affairs, and the members for York-Simcoe, Algoma-Manitoulin and Eglinton-Lawrence. Thank you for those additional comments on this very important issue.

Also, thank you to Brian Cross at the Windsor Star for making public the voices and the concerns of Marlene Roy, Diane Marley, Shelley-ann Meloche and Kate Warner, because I believe it's through their eyes, their hearts, their passion and their fears that we get a sense of what this mistake has cost individuals and cost us all throughout the system because they have given us their voices.

I know that the members of the social policy committee looking into this are taking this very seriously.

I've had direct communication with the member from Nickel Belt and the member from Welland. I know that everybody on that committee is putting long hours and hard work into this because it is a non-partisan issue.

What happened was a huge embarrassment, but it would be even more embarrassing if we played politics with it and if we didn't do everything that is required to fix the system again, to bring faith back to the system and to let people trust Ontario's health care system again.

I think the member from Eglinton-Lawrence hit it right on the head when he said that we all should be giving a big thank you, day in and day out, to the people on the front lines of Ontario's health care system who provide the service that we respect and value so much. I think that's very important. In all of this, the people who are working every day on our health care system deserve our respect. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm pleased to rise this morning to join the debate around Bill 117, the Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act. This bill, if passed, would give the Ontario College of Pharmacists the authority to accredit and inspect pharmacies within public and private hospitals in the same way that it currently accredits and inspects community pharmacies.

Bill 117 would give the Ontario College of Pharmacists the ability to enforce accreditation requirements. That college would also be granted the authority to make regulations and bylaws to establish the requirements and standards for accreditation.

Bill 117 would also provide the Lieutenant Governor in Council with regulation-making authority to designate dispensaries and pharmacies, and it would require all pharmacies to designate a specific contact person for the college.

Throughout the spring of 2013, I had the honour of serving as part of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, which was given the responsibility of looking into the matter of oversight of pharmaceutical companies. For those who served on committee, who stopped by in person or who followed it closely in the press, it's hard now to remember where this all started. We have the benefit of hindsight. The Minister of Health has made much of her response to the situation in question, and there was certainly an element of truth to that. But it remains to be said that, as with so many things that this government undertakes, the follow-through is less impressive than the initial reaction.

The underdosing episode in question, which involved two specific chemotherapy medications, came to light almost a year ago: March 20, 2013. In all, over 1,200 patients were affected. Most of them were undergoing treatment for cancer. Dr. Thiessen's report came in July, 2013, and the bill was introduced and called for second reading debate in October, 2013. It was last debated three weeks before the House rose for the holidays, and it is now three weeks since we returned. As I say, we are coming up on the anniversary of the discovery, and here we are.

This act, of course, arose out of the tragic chemotherapy underdosing incident and also out of the report put forward by Dr. Jake Thiessen, which contained a number of excellent recommendations. Dr. Thiessen was appointed by the Minister of Health to provide an independent assessment and expert opinion on the circumstances surrounding the urgent and highly charged situation. His investigation set out to find the basic cause of the underdosing. He set out to assess how hospitals responded to the incident, to size up the broader realm of pharmaceutical product preparations, and to examine the influence of the various regulatory and oversight bodies, such as Health Canada, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Cancer Care Ontario, the Ontario College of Pharmacists and the Ontario Hospital Association.

Dr. Thiessen also looked at the two key players at the heart of the medication incident. These would be Medbuy and Marchese. It was a very ambitious undertaking but, given the nature of the incident, anything less would be unthinkable and probably not that instructive. His task was to draw some practical wisdom and solutions out of the situation; to make a story told in shades of grey more black and white; to clarify the landscape so that government, health care officials and the public at large would have a better understanding of what went wrong and what we might do to prevent something like this from happening again.

Importantly, he found no evidence of any malicious or deliberate dilution of the chemotherapy drugs. It's worth mentioning yet again that Dr. Thiessen also voiced the opinion that the way the front-liners came together under the circumstances was outstanding. I share his view that dedication and innovation allowed this matter to be brought to light in short order.

This crisis was a warning sign, but it was also an opening to do things differently, to discard what is not working and to improve our health care system not just for a short-term win, but for the long-term well-being of all who call Ontario home. Don Drummond, the government's go-to economist, has previously raised alarms about the province's health care system, its costs, its effectiveness and its sustainability. A health care system that demands an even larger share of precious resources can't help but lead to erosion elsewhere in the system. That's not what anyone wants, so this government needs to set aside the standard spin and take seriously the work before it.

Pharmaceuticals have been the fastest-growing component of health care costs in recent decades. Here's a little perspective: Between 1975 to 2006, our inflation-adjusted expenditure per capita on hospitals ticked up by a respectable 51%. Considerably above this, the cost of physician services almost doubled, rising by 98%. Pharmaceutical costs, meanwhile, increased by a whopping 338%. In other words, by 2006, we were spending more than four times as much on prescription drugs than we were in 1975.

1010

The diversity of pharmaceuticals, the fact that it is an R&D-intensive field, and the increasing range and diver-

sity of applications has contributed to this reality. In fact, the rising cost of prescription drugs has outpaced overall growth for health care spending consistently and for decades. Spending under the Ontario Drug Benefit Program has, of course, grown right alongside that. The program makes up around 10% of what we now spend on public health.

But clinical pharmaceuticals have also taken on an increasingly prominent role in our hospitals and our health care system. This has had the effect of making competitive pricing a central concern for administrators and bureaucrats alike.

Even though the health care system commands a huge chunk of our province's budget, there is always an intense competition for limited resources. Everyone is looking for innovative efficiencies, but however central that drive becomes, this crisis should serve to remind all of us that we cannot—absolutely cannot—forget our core mission. The safety and well-being of the people of this province must be our most basic concern.

This factored into the first of Dr. Thiessen's recommendations that despite the alarming underdosing incident, the continued use of group purchasing organizations to negotiate vendor product preparation pharmaceutical services should not be discouraged. That said, he also says what should be obvious to anyone who followed this story, which is that the process could stand to be improved and standardized.

Potential risk to patients should be one of the criteria considered when evaluating proposals, and every group purchasing organization should develop and adopt a clear, standardized product and/or service specification description. This is important for the very basic reason that this crisis was not caused by malicious will or calculated effort. It was the result of botched communications that outlined the requirements for contracted sterile or non-sterile pharmaceutical preparation services.

This act follows up on recommendation number 12, which recommends that the Ontario College of Pharmacists inspect and license hospital pharmacies. Currently, they only have the ability to do so with respect to community pharmacies. As such, Bill 117 is an important step forward.

But while the Minister of Health has had high praise for the expertise and work of Dr. Thiessen, and while she has endorsed all 12 of the recommendations contained within Dr. Thiessen's report, this bill only directly addresses the last of his recommendations. She has only chosen to act on recommendation 12, which notes: "The OCP shall license all pharmacies operating within Ontario's clinics or hospitals."

Recommendation number 12 also calls for specialized electronic records and label requirements for non-sterile product preparation within a hospital pharmacy. In addition, all hospital pharmacies' labels must comply with comprehensive barcoded identification for all products and all patients. This bill fails to establish these recommendations.

However, Bill 117 fails to address Dr. Thiessen's first recommendation, recommendation 1, which addresses

the role of the group purchasing organizations, or GPOs, in distributing drugs to hospitals, and the improvements needed in the GPO-based process. Bill 117 does not address the role of the vendor to the GPO and the guidelines they will follow.

In the particular chemotherapy underdosing incident, the vendor—Marchese Hospital Solutions—and the GPO—Medbuy—mistakenly delivered diluted chemotherapy to four Ontario hospitals. It is hard to fathom why the ministry would not deal directly with one of the most basic factors that led to the underdosing situation. This omission is critically important. Despite what the public might be led to believe, if Bill 117 was enacted as it stands today, this legislation would not—I repeat, would not—prevent the underdosing of chemotherapy drugs from happening all over again.

Bill 117 changes some things but it does not alter what most people would agree is the most important thing. In his report, Dr. Thiessen pointed out that, “It is clear that the contractual elements and specifications surrounding the agreement between the GPO—Medbuy Corp.—and vendor are pivotal to the underdosing incident.”

Despite this sound and well-considered insight, Bill 117 goes on to address—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Today with us in the west gallery I have my very good friends from the Warkworth correctional institution: Toby Van Roon, Aaron D’Onofrio-Jones and Kim McClinton. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Michael Mantha: C’est avec plaisir que je souhaite la bienvenue à tous les étudiants qui sont ici en fonction du Parlement jeunesse, et surtout à trois étudiants d’Algoma-Manitoulin, qui sont Ross Johnston et Ryan Breen, de Villa Française des Jeunes, et puis Dany Raymond, de l’Orée des Bois. Bienvenue, les amis.

Mr. Grant Crack: Monsieur le Président, mes collègues élus, il me fait grand plaisir et grand honneur de souhaiter la bienvenue à tous les participants du huitième Parlement jeunesse à l’Assemblée législative. Ils sont assis en haut dans la galerie ouest. J’aimerais que nous les accueillions avec une chaude main d’applaudissement. Bienvenue, tout le monde.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Two sets today: First of all, the mother of page captain Jaclyn Hurley is here today: Mary Beth Hurley from my riding of Nipissing.

We also have six students who are here for the franco-phone model Parliament: Maxime Pagé, Émmanuelle

Faucher, Mathieu St-Jules, Rachel Robertson, Cassidy Villeneuve, Adèle Orr and Daniel Orr.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I’d like to welcome Jim Sullivan from the Enniskillen Environmental Association to the chamber today.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It is my pleasure to welcome the page captain’s mother, Manpreet Walia; father, Randhir Walia; sister Ekroop Walia; brother Keerat Walia; aunt Simran Puri; and uncle Gurjitpal Singh, from the great riding of Mississauga-Brampton South. They are in the rising members’ gallery.

Mr. John O’Toole: I’d also like to introduce members from the Enniskillen Environmental Association. There’s Doug Taylor, Clint Cole, Jim Sullivan, who has been introduced, and Pedro Pelletier. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. John Vanthof: C’est avec plaisir que je présente les étudiants qui viennent de ma circonscription: Étienne St-Jean, Alexandra Paquette, Brittany Pepin, Danielle Roy, Alexa Leduc, Lionel Lemieux, Nicolas Roy, Zakarie Robert et Émilie Séguin. Ils sont ici présents en fonction du Parlement jeunesse. Bienvenue à vous.

Mr. Mike Colle: Je veux dire bienvenue à mon collègue, le grand bonhomme d’Ottawa-Vanier, Gilles Morin, qui est ici aujourd’hui. Bienvenue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for stepping on the Speaker’s role.

Ms. Soo Wong: I’m pleased to welcome two classes of grade 5 students from Kennedy Public School along with their teachers, Jeff Hui and Vivian Gadaniadis. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I’d like to introduce to you, in the members’ gallery, Steve and Don Crouchman from Stayner and Washago. They’re here to watch the proceedings here at Queen’s Park today.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I wish to introduce my good friend Joanne Barnett, a good friend for many years and the first planner I ever met in the city of Brampton. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Norm Miller: I would like to wish my seatmate, the member from Newmarket-Aurora, a happy birthday today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thirty-nine and holding.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, we have a couple of birthdays here today. I call him my adopted little brother, Rob Leone; I call him MacLeone. It’s his birthday today, too, the member from Cambridge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Happy birthday. Last call for introductions from the members.

With your indulgence, I’d like to reintroduce the gentleman from Carleton East from the 33rd, 34th, 35th and 36th Parliaments: Gilles Morin. Welcome.

Also with us today in the Speaker’s gallery is Ms. Patricia Clarke, the consul and head of post for the Consulate General of Grenada at Toronto. Please join me in welcoming our guest.

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm very pleased to stand today and seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 156. That's an act to proclaim Tamil Heritage Month. I know there's full support in the Legislature, and I would seek unanimous consent to pass Tamil Heritage Month Act, Bill 156.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is seeking unanimous consent to pass Bill 156. Do we agree? I heard a no.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Timmins—James Bay

Mr. Gilles Bisson: In an attempt not to have any partisanship tricks, I want to note that we did not say no. We actually are in agreement of passage.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is not a point of order. I believe I've already made a statement on this issue, and I request that all members re-read it.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On a brighter note, I would like to announce to the assembly that this is the last day for our pages, and we want to thank them for their hard work and efforts.

Applause.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: We want them back, Speaker. Unanimous consent for three more weeks.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In this case, I have to confess to being one of the biggest hecklers asking them to stay.

However, that said, it is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Chrysler has now announced they'll be making investments in Windsor and Brampton and not going to taxpayers for \$700 million. I want to celebrate that. I think that is a real testament to the quality of work from the Chrysler workers and the product they make.

Premier, your reaction was one of shock. I was pleased, and I wasn't surprised by the announcement because it's an outstanding product—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —workers.

The problem I had, Premier, is, it looked like you were going to hand out hundreds and hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars in a corporate giveaway, when in fact it looks like it wasn't needed.

Premier, how do you make that judgment call? How do you determine when you hand out suitcases full of

cash? How do you make the determination that it's a good project based on the quality of outstanding work that Chrysler workers do? I think it's good news; why don't you?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: All I can say to the Leader of the Opposition is that our position on this side of the House is that working in partnership with business in this province and competing in the global marketplace is what we believe is critical and will keep the auto sector here.

The comments that were made by the Leader of the Opposition were reckless, and they were ill-thought-out. They did not acknowledge the decades of support and partnership that we have had with the auto sector. What I have said is that our door is open. We will continue to work and negotiate with the auto sector to keep those jobs here into the long term.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me get this straight: We're getting the investment, we're getting the jobs, we're getting the new generation minivan, and the taxpayers are saving \$700 million? Isn't this a good thing? Your answer troubles me, Premier, that you and, actually, your colleague in the NDP, Andrea Horwath, just seem to want to hand out suitcases full of cash, even if they're not weighted. You don't seem to have any kind of judgment if the project requires provincial cash. I worry that the Liberals have been nothing more than pushovers when it comes to these sorts of corporate handouts.

I'll ask you again, Premier: Since you were willing to give away hundreds of millions of dollars when it wasn't needed, how do you actually decide, when you give out your \$3 billion a year in corporate handouts—how do you make a judgment whether it's actually needed or not or if the business would make the investment anyway?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The fact is that we were working very closely with the federal government, which, last time I checked, was a Conservative government—friends of the Leader of the Opposition. They seem to understand that it's very important that all levels of government work with business, particularly the auto sector, not just this company, not just Chrysler, but with the auto sector in general, to make sure that the conditions are in place to bring jobs to Ontario, keep the jobs that are here and, more importantly, secure a future footprint for the auto sector in the province. That's the piece that the Leader of the Opposition does not seem to understand, to the detriment of the discussion of the auto sector in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville will come to order.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's odd, Speaker. The Premier seems angry because she doesn't get to hand out \$700 million and a briefcase full of cash. I don't understand. My point of view: Let's actually make Ontario attractive for all investment, get taxes down, get energy under control and reduce the red tape burden. I think the fact that companies are investing because of the quality of our workers without a government handout is a good thing. I don't know why the Premier is angry about that.

Let me ask you this, Premier. You seem to view that the fact that we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs is because we didn't have 300,000 more corporate giveaways. I disagree. In fact, I think the greatest threat to auto jobs, agri-business, and manufacturing jobs is a continuation of the Liberal-NDP coalition in this province of Ontario. That's the greatest threat.

I want to ask you too: You gave Kellogg's corporation \$2.5 million in a corporate handout, and then they closed down the London plant, throwing 550 workers out of a job. Do you think that was a wise investment—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am very pleased that Chrysler will proceed with its investments in both Windsor and Brampton. We're pleased with that news. That's very good news.

But what the Leader of the Opposition needs to acknowledge and doesn't seem to understand is that we need, as a province, to have a relationship with the auto sector that will be a long-term relationship, that there will be commitments long-term and that there will be the ability to continue to partner with the auto sector.

I met with the Governor of Missouri this morning. It's very important to the economy of Missouri that we have the auto sector thriving in both our jurisdictions. There's an interdependence between us and states like Missouri that are dependent on a strong auto sector, not just today, not just to 2016, but into the future. That's the piece that the Leader of the Opposition seems to be missing.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here's the difference: I believe in attracting businesses across the board through lower taxes, affordable energy, working with the colleges for more skilled trade workers, knocking aside the red tape barriers by reducing the number of rules and regulations by a third. The Premier believes in raising tax on energy for everybody else to hand out suitcases full of money. The problem is, Premier, that that will only last until the suitcase of money runs out, and they'll come back for more.

I'll ask you again: If you believe that your corporate giveaways works, why then did Kellogg's Co., that you gave \$1.5 million to in a big grant, then close down their factory throwing out of work 550 men and women? How is that, a wise investment of taxpayers' dollars if they took the money and ran?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the Leader of the Opposition knows that there are particular circumstances

with every company, but I think he also knows that, since 2009, we have gained 440,000 net new jobs in this province.

I think he also knows that if he listens to the leadership of companies like Cisco about why they are here and why they are expanding their businesses here, he will hear, for example, Robert Lloyd, president of development and sales, Cisco: "We find a very educated and loyal workforce here...." He goes on to say: "We just go where the talent is and have the best environment ... the predictability for us to build a workforce here in a good tax environment." That is what Robert Lloyd said about Ontario. That is why businesses are coming here. That is the solid foundation that we have built and will continue to enhance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I agree with what Mr. Lloyd said. I think we have tremendously skilled and educated and hard-working people here in the province of Ontario. I'd put our workers against anybody else's in the world. I've got faith in them. But I ask you, if that's the case why Cisco came here, why the heck did you give them \$200 million in a corporate handout? They are coming here for the quality of our workers. Why are you giving away suitcases of cash? I think because you want to cut a red ribbon because you've lost 300,000 jobs.

You say Kellogg's is a particular circumstance. You say Cisco came here for the workers, but you still gave them \$200 million.

Let me ask you about WindTronics in Windsor. You gave WindTronics in Windsor \$2.7 million in a corporate giveaway and WindTronics said they would create 200 jobs. Two years later, they're gone. The plant has been shuttered. It is empty. The lights are off. Premier, do you think that was a wise investment of money: \$2.7 million for zero jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really believe that the question that has to be asked of the Leader of the Opposition is, if we are competing in a global economy where other jurisdictions are putting on the table conditions like tax regime, like wages, but also cash that actually would draw businesses in, Mr. Speaker, does he believe that we need to compete with those other jurisdictions around the globe? Or does he believe that we can just blinker ourselves and make a decision that we are not going to play on that playing field, that we are going to make up our own rules and we're not going to compete with other jurisdictions?

We're going to compete with other jurisdictions. We've got a terrific workforce. We are not going to undermine it the way the Leader of the Opposition would, and we are going to acknowledge that those other jurisdictions are competing with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, we're going to compete and win against the best in the world when we get rid of a lousy and corrupt Liberal government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader will withdraw.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Look, I've got tremendous faith in our workers. I think that we've got a reckless, expensive and corrupt government that's put us deep in debt. It's under two OPP—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You cannot. Withdraw, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Okay, I withdraw, Speaker.

So Chrysler made the investment without government cash and you wanted to give them cash from taxpayers. You say Kellogg's was a particular circumstance. I'm not sure what your excuse is for WindTronics. I think the latest—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Immigration, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —Nestlé in Trenton, Ontario, received \$3 million in a suitcase full of cash from the Liberal government, two grants of \$1.5 million each. You said that would create 28 new jobs. Premier, yesterday they laid off 25 more workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Please tell me that you're going to actually change your mind and adopt our—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, what we're not going to do is fire 10,000 people from the education sector. We're not going to fire 2,000 health care workers. We're not going to drive down wages. We're not going to weaken pensions. We're not going to cancel infrastructure projects in Mississauga, York region, Toronto and Durham, and we're not going to cancel job-creating green energy jobs that will create clean, renewable energy. We're not going to do those things, Mr. Speaker. That's what the Leader of the Opposition would have us do, and we're not going to go there.

1050

What I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to do is to speak to the people in Ford in Oakville, who are working for Ford, Mr. Speaker—the securing of 2,800 jobs that we did by investing \$70.9 million. I'd ask him to speak to the people who are working for Toyota in Cambridge, where 400 new jobs are being created because of our partnership. I'd ask him to speak to Original Foods in Dunnville: 150 new jobs. I'd ask him to speak to Conestoga Meat Packers' employees in Breslau, where 100 new jobs are being created. I'd ask him to speak to those people and ask them if they think that government partnering with businesses is a good idea, because that's what has created those jobs, Mr. Speaker.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Acting Premier and the Minister of Energy continued to defend Ontario's \$1-billion annual subsidy for exports. Families paying some of the highest bills in Canada have a simple question: Why is the government unable to admit that this is not working for ratepayers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I'm quite sure that the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Energy said no such thing. What I know is that there are relationships and contracts with jurisdictions and that, last year, there was a \$300-million net profit from those energy contracts, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Just a note to the Premier: Your ministers had to correct that word on the record previously, and you may want to check at the end of this session.

On average, Ontario families pay eight and a half cents a kilowatt hour to make electricity, and we're selling it to the United States at two and a half cents. Where do you make the profit on that?

To our east and our west, provinces are getting nearly double that price for the electricity they sell. They've cut out the middlemen and the Wall Street energy traders. Why is this government so unwilling to consider the same?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Energy is going to want to respond to this in the supplementary, but I just want to say this: When this government came into office in 2003, the energy sector was in a mess. We have made investments that have made the energy sector stable and predictable. We have invested in clean, new renewable energy. We have shut down the coal plants.

The other day—yesterday, or the day before—the third party suggested that they would hand a \$100 cheque to folks across the province in the next couple of years, Mr. Speaker. That will not enhance the energy grid. It will not improve or connect people in the north, and there is no long-term plan in that to control energy prices. It does not promote conservation. It is not a responsible plan.

We have that responsible plan. Our long-term energy plan will do all of those things, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to go forward with it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Speaker, thanks to 10 years of mismanagement, Ontarians feel like they're working harder than ever to support the hydro system. They don't feel the hydro system is working for them, and this is the truth. Your Minister of Energy has had to correct himself on the record about a claim that we're making profits on those sales. They've seen public data from Manitoba Hydro showing Ontarians are paying amongst the highest bills in this country, and they know bills are going up.

Why is the Premier so determined to keep a broken status quo when people demand change to the system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that we provided a briefing for the critic with the IESO, who is responsible for this particular issue, and, yes, they clarified—I want to read what they clarified: Revenue from electricity exports reduced costs for Ontarians by \$300 million in 2013, and, since 2006, the costs were reduced by \$2 billion. There's a debate whether it's a profit or not, but the fact of the matter is, our export of electricity is reducing costs to ratepayers in the province of Ontario. Our IEI Program is using surplus electricity to reduce electricity rates for industrial consumers in a big way, and he doesn't even appreciate that.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Once again today, Premier, we've heard the Liberals promising to get public sector salaries under control. My question is this: What's your cap? What is it going to be?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: We've addressed this before, Mr. Speaker. The opposition likes to come up with kind of a bumper-sticker slogan for all this. The fact of the matter is, the leader of the third party went out and put forward a hard cap, then had to swallow herself whole when people started to raise exceptions.

The fact of the matter is, public sector salaries are a complex issue. What this legislation will do is allow us to collect all the relevant information to do the analysis and to come up with caps for different sectors, caps that make sense based on what's happening in the private sector and other jurisdictions.

Unfortunately for our side, it doesn't fit nicely on a bumper sticker, but it's the responsible thing to do, and I'm not going to have to swallow myself whole at a press conference.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaking of bumper stickers, this is like a drive-by by Liberals. You're going to have legislation so that we can figure out what those salaries are, so we can figure out what we've got to do? My God, we could do that now. You don't need legislation.

I'm going to ask you again: What is going to be the hard cap that comes out of this? Or is this just more cynical Liberal politics that we've seen as of late?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm a little bit surprised. I guess the honourable member didn't watch his leader's press conference, because she went out and proposed a hard cap, and then someone brought up an exception—I believe it was a senior power executive—and she said, "Oh, well, we'll have to have exceptions for it. It won't apply there." The fact of the matter is that we have a range of leaders within the public service whose

salaries need to be based on private sector comparators, as well as comparators in other public sector agencies.

As I said, it's not simple. It doesn't fit on a bumper sticker, but it's fair and responsible to make sure that we have public sector leaders who are paid appropriately but are not paid excessively. That's what this legislation will do, and I look forward to the New Democratic Party supporting it so that we can get it through the Legislature and get on with this work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think people are going to find it hard to swallow this. This is coming from the same government who's been happy to burn money for years and is claiming they're going to put out the fire. Give me a break. This is not a solution; this is a crass political exercise on the part of the Liberal Party in front of what might be a spring election.

I ask you again: Give us a number. What is the cap that you are prepared to propose when it comes to salaries for these individuals who are extremely overpaid?

Hon. John Milloy: As I say, we will come forward with a set of caps, depending on the circumstances. I've answered that, Mr. Speaker.

But what I was surprised by is that my honourable friend didn't stand up and talk about the rest of the legislation that we propose to bring forward to this Legislature and suggest the New Democratic Party, I am hoping, will support it. It encourages things such as the putting online of expenses by cabinet ministers and the Premier, something that's done right now, but extends it to the leaders of the opposition and their staff, something—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —that the New Democratic Party has been a bit forgetful in doing over the past couple of years.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: My question is for the Premier. About a month and a half ago, we requested a freedom-of-information request on your expenses for the year 2013. Then the letter came back February 6 saying that if we paid \$1,200—actually, \$1,185, to be exact—we could probably get the information.

We also know—and this has happened since I've arrived here—that Tim Hudak and this caucus have been trying to get information on the gas plants and the cost of them, and it's been like pulling teeth. It wasn't until the auditor finally showed up with the information that we had anything to go on at all. Now we know the police are involved in this.

I want to know: How did you finally arrive at an accountability position where you're finally going to come forward and put information and make it open and

transparent, when all along you've been hiding everything?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.
Premier?

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite was not a member when I came into this office a year ago, but what I said when I came in a year ago was that we were going to open up the process. At that point, we talked specifically about opening up the committee and providing information on the relocation of the gas plants, to which all parties had agreed. We said that we wanted to open up the process.

Hundreds of thousands of documents have been placed before the committee. There have been dozens of people who have come before the committee to answer questions. I have been there twice, so we did open that process.

On the issue of expenses, I think the member opposite would need to know that he's just wrong about that. My expenses are online. They're up to date. They were posted voluntarily, along with the expenses of ministers and staff. We did receive a freedom-of-information request and it will be released through the normal freedom-of-information process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Again, to the Premier: The information on total dollars might be online, but the details that are required, and that should be in your openness provision here, are not there. I just wonder why it's taken a whole year or even 10 years before this information finally comes forward. I think it's high time that this was done.

You talk about your openness as far as the gas plants are concerned, but you know full well that it took the auditor and the police to finally get to the bottom of the matter. Whether you've been here a year or six months, it doesn't matter. You weren't open. When are you going to be open?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.
Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows that we have complied with all of the requests that the committee has asked of us. We have provided thousands of pages of documents. As I said, there was a freedom-of-information request put in and the information will be released as part of that.

There is a cost associated with those requests and, in fact, there was a cost paid to obtain the Leader of the Opposition's expenses, many of which are not online. There are very large gaps, and a freedom-of-information request was filed and there was a cost associated with that.

I hope that this line of questioning from the member opposite implies that they will be supporting the legis-

lation when it's introduced in the House. I fully expect that they will do that.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is for the Premier. Good morning, Premier.

First, I want to thank you for the phone call last night and keeping me in the loop in the situation at Chrysler. When there are jobs on the line, we need to set aside our political games and grandstanding and work to make investments happen.

People in Windsor and Essex county are very concerned about the long-term future of our Chrysler plant and the jobs of the thousands of people who work there. What assurances can you give, Premier, that your government is doing everything possible to work with Chrysler to ensure its Windsor operations will remain viable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member opposite for the question. I know that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade is going to want to speak to this.

I want to just say that I want to let everyone in this House know and the public know that the member for Windsor West has been—Windsor West; right?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Yes.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Children and Youth Services has been an absolute champion on this file. She has worked tirelessly to make sure that our policy of having an open door and working for those long-term commitments was absolutely what we were doing at the table, in conjunction with the federal government. The auto sector in this province and in Windsor has a huge champion in our member, and I hope that we will be able to continue those negotiations. We have our door open.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I want to assure this House that my New Democratic colleagues and I take our responsibilities seriously when it comes to securing good auto sector jobs in this province. We're calling on all parties at all levels of government to set aside their political differences and pull together on this one.

Premier, can you assure our Chrysler employees, indeed our entire community, that your door remains open for future dialogue with Chrysler officials about the long-term viability of Windsor's assembly plant operations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I hope the member opposite walks over and provides the leader of the official opposition a copy of that letter right now, because currently, the leader of the official opposition is living in a fantasyland where he believes that his irresponsible and negative comments about the Chrysler negotiations at a particularly sensitive time in the negotiations—he's living in a fantasyland where he actually thinks that Chrysler's decision validates his irresponsible behaviour, and it's not simply our view on this side of the House.

The federal Minister of Industry, James Moore, who has been working very closely with myself and supportive of this deal with Chrysler, has indicated that the Hudak comments have been detrimental to the negotiations. That's not just his opinion; he heard that directly from the head of Chrysler Canada.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. I was pleased to be part of an announcement this morning in which you and the Premier spoke about our intention to introduce major enhancements to accountability for both our government and for members of this Legislature. Under Premier Wynne, our government has committed to leading by example and being as transparent and accountable as possible.

I was encouraged to hear this morning that these new proposed improvements would bring the same high level of transparency to members of this House. Since being elected to the Legislature last fall, I've worked hard to bring the issue of accountability of elected members to this House. Ontarians have a right to access, in a clear way, the information on how elected officials are spending their tax dollars.

I was very happy to learn that the government plans to introduce new legislation that, if passed, would create a climate of open government and enhanced accountability here in Ontario.

Minister, can you outline to this House how the government will be proposing to make the important improvements that will make posting expenses mandatory for all members?

Hon. John Milloy: I really sincerely want to thank the member for Ottawa South for his advocacy on this issue. I think members are aware of the private member's bill that he put forward on this.

As members are aware, today the Premier announced our proposed plan to introduce legislation to enhance accountability and transparency in government. Within that is our intention to introduce amendments which would require expense information for cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants and opposition leaders and their respective staff to be posted online for anybody to see.

As members may know, expense information for cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants and their staff has been posted online on a voluntary basis by the government since 2010. The proposed amendments would, if passed, turn these voluntary practices into a mandatory requirement and extend the same requirement to opposition leaders and their staff. We expect the same level of transparency from everyone in the House.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementarity?

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Speaker; it's very encouraging news. Through you to the minister, I'm glad to hear that under this proposal all members of this House

would be required to embrace the same level of accountability as members of cabinet and parliamentary assistants.

I am especially impressed that the leaders of the opposition parties would be required, if the legislation passes, to be as accountable as the Premier and cabinet ministers. As representatives of the people, we must all hold ourselves to a higher standard.

Ontarians not only expect transparency from their elected officials but also from the people working in the agencies funded by their tax dollars. In speaking to Ontarians about my private member's bill on this issue, they often ask what is being done to enhance accountability not only for elected officials but for officials working in agencies.

Hon. John Milloy: Since 2010, expense information for senior executive appointees and the top five claimants in 21 of the government's largest agencies and organizations are required to be posted under the government's travel, meal and hospitality expense directive. Ministry senior managers are covered under this directive as well. Expense claims undergo a rigorous approval process, first within each of the organizations and then by the Integrity Commissioner.

1110

In our announcement today, we've committed to proposing new, improved oversight powers of the Integrity Commissioner to review the expenses of all of Ontario's 197 classified agencies. If passed, this proposed legislation would allow the Integrity Commissioner to select any number of these agencies and review the expenses of their executives.

The Premier has committed to making the government of Ontario the most accountable government in Canada. Measures like these would, if passed, go a long way to ensuring that Ontarians can access this important information.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Hopefully I won't have to pay \$1,200 for an answer.

The government has found itself in the middle of a white collar crime investigation by the elite OPP anti-rackets squad for its role in the cancelled gas plants and its role in the deleted emails that attempted to suppress opposition concerns. Yesterday, hard drives from government computers were seized. We know 20 Liberal officials have been interviewed by the OPP. We know the Premier's own office was visited by the OPP. We know that if charges are laid, those responsible could face up to 14 years in jail.

Ontario Liberals have now seen their government under investigation twice by the OPP. They have broken international law. The Premier herself refuses to hand over her expenses unless you pay \$1,200.

What makes this more vile is that she has no mandate from the people. The honourable thing is for her to call an election. Will she do it? Will she seek a mandate from the people?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, this question really is beneath the member. It really is.

The Ontario Provincial Police are undertaking work, and I think all members of this House recognize the fact that we allow the Ontario Provincial Police to undertake their work. We don't reach conclusions on our own. We don't speculate.

Perhaps in the supplementary, the honourable member can talk about our new piece of legislation, because she mentions some of the concerns around emails. In fact, that legislation contains responses to the Information and Privacy Commissioner's recommendations in that regard. So I look forward to her support on it.

The other thing it does, Mr. Speaker, is it makes it mandatory for the Leader of the Opposition to post his expenses, something, through our access-to-information request, we found out he hasn't been doing. In fact, we found \$15,000 of expenses that he forgot to put on his website. Perhaps she wants to address that in her supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd gladly address that. It was the Truth in Government Act put forward by the Ontario PC caucus four years ago that would have addressed that.

I'm going to have the page take this over to the Premier. This is the \$1,200 bill she sent the Ontario PC caucus to get access to her information and her expenses. I'll throw in all of Tim Hudak's expenses as well, just so they have them.

But the facts speak for themselves: two OPP investigations, one broken international law and a government without a mandate. The Premier appears to be clinging to the wood panelling in her office with clenched fingernails. She can't leave the office because she wants the power. The right thing to do, the honourable thing to do, is to call an election, get rid of the scandal, get rid of the controversy, create the jobs, reduce the taxes. That's what Ontarians want. They can't deliver it. Will they do the right thing?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: I wish that the opposition had been as forthcoming when it came to the leader's expenses when we had to go through the freedom-of-information process to get them and wait for the requisite amount of time.

I do want to correct my record: I think I said \$15,000 but, in fact, there was \$13,271.30 charged to taxpayers by Mr. Hudak that was missing from his public postings, including flights and accommodations.

Again, I listened carefully and didn't hear the honourable member express her support for this legislation. The point behind this legislation is to encourage—shall we

say, force—the leaders of the two opposition parties to do what our government has been doing voluntarily since 2010.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Last week, 4,000 people showed up at a job fair for the opening of a new mall of Niagara-on-the-Lake. That's a testimony to how much our region needs jobs. Instead of helping businesses in Niagara create jobs, this government is raising their costs with skyrocketing hydro bills while subsidizing private companies in western New York with cheaper hydro. What is the government's plan for Niagara businesses when competing against western New York in relation to electricity prices?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm pleased to take this question as well and talk about the important progress that we've made in job creation right across this province. Since the bottom of the recession, we've added nearly 450,000 jobs. The most recent data—and I'm looking forward to the jobs data coming out tomorrow—show that we're making progress, not just generally in terms of bringing those jobs back—6,000 jobs last month, for example, or rather in the month of January; we're going to hear about February tomorrow—but also, importantly, 7,800 new jobs for our young people. I can't help myself but to reference my colleague in the back, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. An important part of that progress that we're seeing on youth job creation is our youth jobs fund. Under his careful stewardship, we have more than 8,000 young people across the province who now have training positions, in those first opportunities with employers across the province, including in the Niagara region.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. A new report shows that one in every two residents in Niagara Falls is struggling financially. At the same time, we saw 4,000 people standing in line in hopes of finding a job, any job, even part-time. Niagara Falls has a massive amount of cheap hydroelectricity in our own backyard, yet businesses and ratepayers are paying the highest energy prices in the country—much higher than western New York. Premier, why are ratepayers subsidizing the export of electricity so businesses in western New York can hire while people in Niagara face the highest unemployment in the province?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, we do have surplus energy, and that's good. We came from a deficit situation. We invested heavily in the system. We do sell electricity, and we reduced the cost to our system last year by \$300 million, but we also are turning our thoughts and our direction towards using surplus electricity to support Ontario businesses. We created the

Industrial Electricity Incentive Program, and that is providing electricity to companies that want to expand or settle in Ontario by giving them electricity at about a 50% reduction, a 50% discount. We've announced about six or seven of those companies. We are also not supporting New York companies anymore. That surplus energy is in Ontario for Ontario businesses.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, a lot of parents in my riding are a little confused and concerned as to what is going on with collective bargaining in the education sector. My parents understand that there is an urgency for the speedy passage of the government's proposed Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, but do not understand why legislation that was introduced back in October is still stuck in the legislative process. We've heard you say many times that this is a bill you've been closely working on with all of our partners in education when it was developed. So could the minister please explain why such a bill, which is the result of such extensive consultation and collaboration, has come to a standstill in the legislative process?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member for raising such an important issue. First, this member is absolutely correct that the speedy passage of this bill is extremely important. This bill would create central tables for collective bargaining with formal roles for the province, the trustee associations, school boards, teacher federations and support staff unions. This new process would encourage discussion, promote innovative ideas and ensure every partner has a clear role to play. The proposed model would help us promote constructive dialogue and maintain positive, respectful relationships with our education partners in the best interests of the students who are here today.

1120

Speaker, it is important to understand that this is a made-in-Ontario approach to collective bargaining that was developed through extensive consultations with our education partners. It will help us with collective bargaining, and we need it passed now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister. Listening to your response, it struck me that instead of the opposition holding the government to account, we're now in a situation where the government is having to hold the opposition's feet to the fire to ensure our children's education is not sacrificed at the altar of petty political gamesmanship. My understanding is that things have come to such a pass that, yesterday, we had to vote in this Legislature to seek permission for the committee to sit during constituency week. Now I understand that that sitting is also at risk.

Could you, Minister, please tell us yet again why this legislation is at risk of the official opposition's political games?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd be happy to explain what's going on here. As the member mentioned, when a similar motion passed in this House last fall, allowing the committee to sit during the winter break, the official opposition chose to boycott the process. This is the same risk that we are now facing from the same party that finally, yesterday, decided it had an education plan.

Speaker, I am calling on all members of this Legislature to ensure that what happened in the winter break doesn't happen next week, and that the committee will sit for clause-by-clause consideration so the legislation can move through the process. Throughout the course of the day, I've seen the Chair and the subcommittee members sitting here, and I call on those subcommittee members to meet immediately after question period and get this sorted out so they can meet next week and do clause-by-clause.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

New question.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Premier. Premier, I have a letter from Trent Gervais, the manager of the Peterborough airport, expressing his strong objections to the approved Sumac Ridge wind turbine project. This airport is a great source of economic development for not only my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, but for the city of Peterborough. It boasts the longest paved runway between Ottawa and Toronto, at an astounding 7,000 feet.

Millions of dollars have been invested by all three levels of government to see this airport grow. Seneca College's school of aviation opened its doors there in January, and it's expected to generate \$12.32 million of economic activity in the community each year and support 151 jobs. With Seneca and five other flight schools operating out of the Peterborough airport, the safety of new pilots is now at risk because of the siting of this wind turbine project.

Since the Minister of Rural Affairs won't stand up for the people of his riding in Peterborough, I'm standing here today on behalf of his—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I've made a comment about this before—about talking about other people's ridings. I would caution the member not to do that again.

Please finish your question; you have time for wrap-up.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Will you stop the Sumac Ridge project and let the Peterborough airport get back to the business of creating much-needed jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member knows that FIT contracts, renewable contracts, allow for termination only in cases where project developers do not meet their contractual obligations, and the OPA could be

subject to legal action if it terminates FIT contracts for projects which have met their obligations.

Having said that, there is an environmental process, and an appeal to that environmental process to deal with issues. The Leader of the Opposition in his Million Jobs Act has indicated that he would give the Minister of Energy the authority to cancel those contracts. Mr. Speaker, that would expose the provincial government to over \$20 billion in liabilities. We're not prepared to do that.

We are prepared to adhere to the environmental process, the appeal process that's in place, and I will hopefully be able to refer the supplementary to the Minister of the Environment on that issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: To whichever minister is going to take the next question, I guess: There are certainly lots of Ministry of Environment outs for that contract. I asked the Premier on Monday to call a moratorium on wind turbines, to which you responded that the Liberal government has "put new rules in place," and that you would "give communities more input" on siting. In the letter from the manager of the Peterborough airport, he says these wind turbines are threatening the success of the business, putting up barriers to job creation and risking the safety of flight patterns and approaches—it's kind of important. Your government clearly did not have the necessary guidelines and regulations in place before siting this project.

You claim your government has new rules in place. Why is it that you cannot listen to this community, like you said you would, and cancel the wind turbines at the Sumac Ridge and Peterborough airport location?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: There is a process which has been established to allow people to have the appropriate input on matters of this kind. The proponent has to go through a very rigorous regime to ensure that that proponent would be in compliance with the regulations set out by the Ministry of Energy and by the Ministry of the Environment.

I am confident that all aspects of this issue will be dealt with appropriately through the process. Ministry of the Environment officials and, indeed, officials of other ministries, who provide comments in these circumstances, are always pleased to hear from those who have views to express and are respectful of those views being expressed by those individuals, and give serious consideration to them.

I encourage all to participate in that process and ensure that those views are put forward. I can tell you that they will be considered seriously, as they always are.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Last week, the minister met with the mayor of Thunder Bay and city councillors, who expressed their concern over the ongoing problems with their local health

care system. After 50 long days of gridlock, caused by an overwhelming number of patients who should not be in their hospital but have nowhere else to go, the hospital is now facing a deficit. Will the minister recognize that the hospital should not be forced to cut services because of a lack of capacity in their community?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. This is an issue that I have been discussing daily with the members from Thunder Bay—Superior North and Thunder Bay—Atikokan. They are keeping me informed on a daily basis about the challenges in Thunder Bay. I'm very much aware of it. I know the hospital, the community care access centre, the LHIN, the city—everyone is working together to develop a plan to rectify the situation.

It is unacceptable, what's happening at Thunder Bay; I will be the first to admit that. I look forward to being able to speak directly with the people of Thunder Bay on how we're going to move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The minister is partly right: The hospital is working with the community care access centre, with the LHINs and with any other community-based organization to try to address the community problem. But the weeks of gridlock have taken their toll on the hospital budget. Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre is running a deficit of about \$2.4 million and is looking at cutting services to balance their books, like they are mandated to do by law.

What is the minister going to do to address this ongoing problem and the hospital deficit that comes with it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the initial question, the situation in Thunder Bay is not acceptable. That's why we are working to support the community, because they have come together and offered some solutions.

This is very much a project that's under way. I am very much focused on finding a resolution to this. As I say, I look forward to being able to communicate with the people of Thunder Bay about some of the steps we can take in addition to those we have already taken to rectify the situation.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Ontario's tech sector is a vital part of our economy, both across the province and locally in my constituency, with thousands of tech grads from institutions in and around my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood.

1130

I know first-hand the importance of a strong tech sector in Ontario. Just recently, Cisco has renewed their commitment to continuing their R&D operations. As a significant employer, they are an integral part of Ontario's economy. It is important that we continue to create and retain jobs across the province and ensure that we are supporting key sectors like tech.

These are competitive times, and Ontario has proven it can compete globally on the world stage, remaining one of the highest-ranking jurisdictions in North America when it comes to foreign direct investment. With Cisco's recent announcement to create an R&D hub in Toronto, could the minister please update the House on what our government's recent partnership means for Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood for this important question. I have to say, I'm very excited and proud of this announcement yesterday by Cisco. I had the honour of attending, along with the deputy mayor of the city of Toronto and other business leaders and dignitaries, where Cisco announced its quite remarkable \$100-million investment in this city to create what they're calling the Internet of Everything Innovation Centre. This is a centre which is going to be available to support start-ups, to work on business-to-business relationships and really to significantly grow the economy and grow the IT sector in Ontario.

I should mention that this is only the fourth of Cisco's innovation centres in the entire world, so we're following. They have one in South Korea, one in Brazil, one in Germany, and we are the only innovation centre for Cisco in all of North America, so this really was an important announcement. Of course, it comes on the heels of our important and positive announcement in December with Cisco: They're investing \$4 billion over the next 10 years to create as many as 3,700 jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister, for the update. While the tech industry in my riding and across the province will continue to see the strong commitment our government is making in the industry, there are still some concerns from my constituents about the overall growth of the tech sector. We know Ontario has fared better than many other jurisdictions in North America and that our economy is back on track, having recovered all the jobs lost during the global recession.

We know having a good job to wake up to every day is what keeps Ontario strong. Speaker, through you, back to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment: What is the government doing to support the continued growth by helping to create good, meaningful jobs in Ontario's tech sector?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you again for the question. Although I know that the PC Party does not support our partnership with Cisco and didn't support the investment that we made to secure that \$4-billion investment and the creation of 3,700 jobs, this partnership is the largest job-creating investment in the history of Ontario's and Canada's tech sector. It really is unprecedented and it will certainly enhance Ontario's reputation as a leader in research and innovation.

It's also a great example of how the government of the day can work together with the private sector to realize these important investments. We have more than a quarter of a million people working in the high-tech sector in Ontario. Last year, we were third in North America, after California and Texas. Well, I'm happy to say

that we've taken that second-place spot away from Texas. We're actually number two in all of North America, after Silicon Valley, in terms of IT investments.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Premier. Premier, your government's 2012 budget devastated the horse racing industry. As we all know, the NDP allowed that budget to pass, putting thousands of people out of work. You set up an expensive transition panel. You set up another new bureaucracy and a funding program with no details. You raced to the rescue of Fort Erie just days before a by-election, but racetracks across Ontario are still waiting for their race dates. Some are waiting to see if they'll even have a season.

I ask the Premier: How many contracts have you signed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows that the plan that we have put in place is a stable plan that will allow the horse racing industry to stay on track into the future.

The Slots at Racetracks plan was not transparent. It was not sustainable, and it had to be changed. We have made that change. John Snobelen, Elmer Buchanan and John Wilkinson worked to make sure that the \$400 million that we put in place will establish that framework going forward.

I hope that the member opposite understands that the Ontario Racing Commission announced the details of the 2014 component of the Horse Improvement Program. We are working with breeders, and we are working with the tracks to make sure that those dates are in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Again, to the Premier: If this is a stable plan, it should be in the stable.

I've spoken to the horse racing industry leaders, and they are fed up with this government's delays. They are tired of excuses. They are frustrated, because they can't plan this year's season, which may or may not even exist.

It's my understanding that the contracts are due to be in place by April 1. It is now March 6, and I'm told that racetracks are still waiting to hear if their race dates have even been approved.

When can racetracks expect to hear from you so that they can begin planning their upcoming season? When will you pick up the phone, and when will you finalize race dates?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The ORC negotiations are ongoing, and I'm sure that the member opposite knows that. He knows that it was important that there be those individual conversations with each track, because each track is different. The fact is, the Fort Erie situation is different from the other tracks, and those negotiations are ongoing.

My intention is that we have a stable industry that is transparent and that works for all sectors of the horse racing industry. I made that commitment when I came into this office. The panel had been put in place by my predecessor. We have now got a plan that is sustainable,

and we will be working with the tracks to make sure that they have those dates for 2014.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Attorney General. Partner Assault Response Programs play a vital role in holding abusive men accountable for violence against women and keeping women safe. Each year, about 14,000 men participate in Partner Assault Response Programs, most of them through court order. Yet the province only provides funding for about 9,000 of these offenders.

Minister, why did your government arbitrarily decide to reduce the length of the PAR program from 16 to 12 weeks just to cut costs without any research on how this change will affect family safety?

Hon. John Gerretsen: She's quite correct that the Partner Assault Response Program is a very important component of our coordinated response to domestic violence. She's also correct that we have changed the number of weeks that an individual can be part of this program from 16 to 12 weeks. But one of the reasons why we did that is that there are many more people now who need that kind of service. The funding has not been cut. It's still exactly the same amount as it was last year, at \$10.6 million.

We found that there was simply too long a delay for new individuals who needed the service to get into the program. So what we have done is, we have slightly reduced the number of weeks that each participant will be involved in the program so that the individuals who need the service can be dealt with a lot quicker, because it has gone from something like 11,000 individuals two or three years ago to 14,000 today. People shouldn't have to wait four to six months to get into the program.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again to the Attorney General: This government, by the way, has allowed 15,000 women to be turned away from emergency shelters due to lack of funding, potentially back into the hands of those abusers. Partner Assault Response Programs are an essential component of a coordinated community response to women, giving offenders the opportunity to examine their beliefs and attitudes toward domestic abuse and to learn non-abusive ways of resolving conflict.

The ministry's own provincial advisory committee has recommended against this change. Why is this government ignoring the advice of its own experts and pushing through a change that is putting women's lives at risk?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, Speaker, as I mentioned before, the number of people who are in the program has gone up from 11,000 to about 14,000 in the last two to three years. We want to make sure that these individuals who need this much-needed service—so that we can reduce domestic violence—can be treated as quickly as possible. There has been no evidence at all that a 12-week program isn't just as efficient and good for the individuals involved as a 16-week program.

The funding has not been cut. The organizations are aware of that. There has been an awful lot of consultations with all of these good groups in our province that are doing this kind of work. I think that it's very important that people get access to the program as quickly as possible, because they are in the greatest need immediately after their first charge. It's a good program. We're continuing the program.

SPEAKER'S BOOK AWARD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Windsor-Tecumseh on a point of order.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, I want to commend you for hosting your annual Speaker's Book Award last night, honouring Ontario's authors and publishers. It was great to see Charlie Angus, the federal MP for Timmins-James Bay, win the competition last night—and, also, the father of the member for Haldimand-Norfolk, who was there and one of the finalists as well.

You did a great job last night, Speaker. I hope you continue honouring Ontario's authors and publishers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I appreciate the member's comments. All of our authors were very thrilled, and our publishers were of the same opinion. We want to celebrate literacy in Ontario.

There are—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Write a paragraph.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming one of the best criminal defence lawyers in the city of Toronto, Jonathan Rosenthal, to the House today. This is his first time in the House, so please join me in welcoming him, as well as my brother Guratan Singh, who is also in the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ADVANCED AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to share comments about a really important program in the agri-food industry. Last week, I had the privilege to speak to class 15 of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program as part of their Toronto seminar. You may recall that we also welcomed them to Queen's Park.

Today, I'm pleased to share a little bit about the excellent work that this program is doing, developing Ontario's future leaders in the agri-food sector.

Established in 1984, AALP, as it is known, is an executive development program for men and women who want to broaden their horizons and expand their networks to help shape the future of the agriculture and food sectors in Ontario.

AALP is administered by the Rural Ontario Institute. Through a series of seminars, AALP participants develop leadership skills and an increased knowledge of the agri-food system at the local level, the provincial level, the national, North American and, actually, international levels, and they study the different perspectives and critical issues that are involved in that sector.

I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, I'm an alumnus of that program. I was in class 6 just a few years ago, and I can personally say that it provides a strong foundation in terms of attributes necessary to keep moving the agri-food industry forward in Ontario.

In the recognition of the agriculture literacy week that we're celebrating right now, I'd like to share with you that Ontario's agri-food industry supports more than 740,000 jobs in this province. In order to make sure the industry continues to grow, it's important that we train industry leaders, and the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program is very successful in doing just that.

NORTHERN ONTARIO MINING SUPPLY SHOWCASE

Mr. John Vanthof: On Monday, March 3, 2014, the first annual Northern Ontario Mining Supply Showcase was held at the Steam Whistle Brewery, and judging by the number of exhibitors and people at the event, it was a resounding success.

The showcase coincided with the second day of the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada—commonly known as PDAC—conference, one of the world's largest conferences for the mineral industry; 30,000-plus people attend the annual PDAC conference, and the northern showcase provided a unique opportunity for northern Ontario companies to showcase their products to people from around the world.

Special recognition should go to Marla Tremblay, James Frank and the rest of the team who organized the showcase. They did a tremendous job.

My riding of Timiskaming—Cochrane was well represented at the showcase. Municipalities like Cochrane, Temiskaming Shores and Elk Lake had displays, as well as two mining service companies from my hometown of Earleton, Nor Arc and Fabritane. Local colleges like Northern and Boréal were also displaying their mining training capabilities. Our area has a rich mining heritage, and our local mining service sector has grown from that base.

As I walked into the exhibit hall, one of the first people I met was Latchford Mayor George Lefebvre. He looked like a proud father, and for good reason. People like George and Mayor Terry Fiset of Elk Lake have been promoting our area at PDAC for several years, and

their hard work has been the springboard for the showcase. Thank you for a job well done.

SCHOMBERG FARM TOUR

Ms. Helena Jaczek: On Saturday, the Schomberg Agricultural Society, based in my great riding of Oak Ridges—Markham, will have their 10th annual farm tour. Held on the first Saturday of March break, the tour seeks to celebrate agriculture and showcase to the public the work that local farmers do. Led by the efforts of local volunteers like Janet Orr, the tour now attracts over 700 people.

The public will be able to visit seven different farms in the area, such as Maple Lawn Farm, which has been home to the Mills family for over seven generations, where the public will learn about the milling of whole wheat; Baker Ridge Farm—not surprisingly, owned by the Baker family—features over 150 sheep and horses that range from big black Percherons to small miniature horses.

Rexlea Jerseys cattle farm will teach the public how milk is produced. The farm has been owned and operated by the Sheardown family since 1912, and it recently won top honours from Jersey Canada in the constructive breeder category.

Winsong Farms is owned by Bill and Winnie Stott, where guests will see animals perform a wide variety of entertaining tricks.

Annual events like the farm tour remind me how privileged I am to represent a riding that has deep roots in both rural and urban Ontario.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, in April of last year I spoke about the ice storm that hit Perth—Wellington. I kept the government informed. I asked them to recognize our local states of emergency and I asked them to come through with the assistance we needed. Unfortunately, they did not come through.

Then, in December, we were hit with another ice storm—along with many other parts of the province. Again, I kept the government informed. I spoke up for the municipality of North Perth and the town of Minto, which have applied for assistance. Twice I wrote to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and I appreciate her promise to review both requests without regard to where their municipality is located.

Following the government's announcement last week, city of Toronto officials confidently stated that virtually all of their costs would be covered. That's good news. I hope the government will soon confirm that assistance for the GTA, but also for other areas affected by the storm, including Minto and North Perth.

When a storm comes our way, small and rural municipalities are often most in need of assistance, and even more so when a second storm comes our way.

Respectfully, I call on the government to support us, and I ask them to support our call for an all-party committee to study the province's emergency preparedness.

NORMA BERTI

Miss Monique Taylor: Today I rise to speak of Norma Berti. Norma was the first steelworker woman in Canada to serve on her local union executive as financial secretary. Norma was hired in 1950 and retired in 1984, after 34 years as a member of Local 1005 at Stelco's Hilton Works.

Norma was an activist all of her life. She was a member of SOAR, and a member of the Hamilton and District Council of Women, where she served as the treasurer. She was the house convenor for the Provincial Council of Women, and had so many other wonderful roles in our community.

In 1976, Norma was the first recipient of the Woman of the Year Award from the Status of Women of Hamilton. During an executive meeting, she was quoted as saying, "The more I learned, the more I wanted to learn."

Norma died in Hamilton on October 9, 2001, after a lengthy battle with cancer. There is now a Norma Berti Education Scholarship awarded to the son or daughter of a steelworker in her memory.

We are very proud of the work that Norma Berti has done in Hamilton, and I look forward to our annual International Women's Day breakfast that is always held in Norma Berti's name.

I would like to take this time also to wish all of the women in this House a very happy International Women's Day.

RANKED BALLOTING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I would like to rise today to speak about a volunteer organization that has been operating in Toronto for the past few years. It was spearheaded by my friend Dave Meslin, who will be here later today, with many thousands of volunteers and supporters behind the organization, who are also in support of the bill I will be tabling later this afternoon.

The group is called the Ranked Ballot Initiative of Toronto, and they have been working to implement a ranked ballot voting system for Toronto municipal elections.

The organization started a few years ago, following a series of town hall consultations carried out by the Emerging Leaders Network called the Better Ballots project.

The RaBIT initiative has worked tirelessly for a democratic voting system in Toronto, and I am proud to support these rising leaders in our community who are committed to Toronto's diversity and inclusion and to strengthening our voting system.

LOCAL FOOD FUND

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I rise today because I've been hearing from farmers and local food groups who are upset that they are being ignored by this government again.

This government has held many photo ops to talk about the Local Food Fund, but when the cameras are turned off, they seem to simply have forgotten about it.

The first round of applications was due by Halloween, and the program guidelines clearly state that the application would be reviewed in 45 days. It's been 126 days—over four months—but farmers and food groups are still waiting for an answer. The applications were submitted before it started to snow—we all know how long ago that was—and yet they still haven't received an answer.

1310

Farmers have been told that the Local Food Fund applications are stuck on the Premier's desk because, as part-time minister, she simply doesn't have time to deal with them.

There is speculation that the Premier is holding off on allocating the funds so that she can use these announcements for pre-election photo ops. I hope neither of those things is true, Madam Premier.

Today I'm asking the Premier to take the time to focus on our agriculture and food sector, respond to the applications and prove that she wasn't playing political games at the expense of rural Ontario by committing not to use these announcements for photo ops.

VAUGHAN FILM FESTIVAL

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I'm very happy to rise in my place this afternoon to discuss a great local event that happened just a couple of days ago in my riding of Vaughan.

Monday, March 3, marked the annual Vaughan Film Festival media launch. This launch is a precursor to the April Vaughan Film Festival, a three-day event showcasing up-and-coming international filmmakers who have used my riding, my community, as their platform.

The event is an excellent example of the great local talent we have brewing in the community in Vaughan. It's organized by co-chairs Mark Pagliaroli and Antonio Ienco, who have a wealth of experience in the arts themselves. They are the founders and co-owners of Reel Film Pictures, a great Vaughan-based production company.

Monday's media launch is the opening act, if you will, of the Vaughan Film Festival. It announces those movies that will be in the lineup for the big event and provides people with a sneak peek into those films that have been nominated for awards this year.

It also officially announced the winning school in the Giant Reel competition. This year's winner was Father Bressanni Catholic High School, in Vaughan, which received \$2,000 towards their art department. And two high school students have also been selected to receive \$1,500 scholarships toward their post-secondary education.

Film and television production contributes \$2.4 billion annually to our economy and supports over 46,000 jobs. That's why I'm happy to support great events like the Vaughan Film Festival. This industry is thriving, and it also promotes arts and culture in our province. That's something that I know we can all support.

TRANSFORMER STATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to welcome representatives of the Enniskillen Environmental Association to the House today: Clint Cole, Doug Taylor, Jim Sullivan and Pedro Pelletier.

The association held a news conference today in opposition to this government's very poor decision on a mega transformer project in my riding of Durham. The Enniskillen Environmental Association has warned this government that this massive transformer proposal on the site of the Oak Ridges moraine will risk millions of litres of toxic chemicals going into the moraine itself.

Their question to this government is, "Why would you allow the Clarington transformer station to threaten clean, reliable drinking water for 250,000 people in Ontario?"

On behalf of the residents living near the transformer site and the Enniskillen Environmental Association, I want to put on the public record that this government and the Premier must be held responsible for all damages to property, life and limb of the citizens in this area.

Hydrogeological specialist Dr. John Cherry, of G360, the Applied Groundwater Research Centre, has reviewed the transformer station proposal and recommended study. Clarington council has agreed to put up \$25,000.

I charge today that the Minister of the Environment had no time and did not review the report.

I urge this government to listen to the advice of the citizens, scientists and elected representatives and protect the Oak Ridges moraine and the very drinking water of the people in this area that you've ignored.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Nine years ago, almost to the date, I gave birth to a little girl named Victoria Varner. Eight years ago, almost to the date, I was elected to the assembly. I'm really proud that my little girl, Victoria, has joined us here today with her dad, my husband, Joe Varner. They're here to see the assembly, and I'm really happy for that.

Thank you for the indulgence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

I thank all members for their statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CANADIAN AGRICULTURE LITERACY WEEK

SEMAINE DE SENSIBILISATION À L'AGRICULTURE CANADIENNE

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's my honour to stand in the Legislature to recognize the third annual Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week. This week provides

elementary and high school students from across the country with an opportunity to celebrate agriculture and to learn more about its importance in our everyday lives.

Mr. Speaker, the agri-food sector is extremely important to Ontario. When it thrives, everyone benefits. As the Minister of Agriculture and Food, I've had the opportunity to work to raise the profile of the sector across the province, and I know that farmers and agricultural organizations appreciate the profile that they are receiving; I've heard that first hand.

En tant que ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation, j'ai eu la possibilité de faire mieux connaître le secteur partout dans la province, et je sais que les agriculteurs et les organismes agricoles en sont reconnaissants.

Our goal this week—to gain a better understanding of how our food is grown and produced—is about raising that profile even higher because it's so important to me that everyone knows a thriving agri-food industry means a thriving Ontario. That is why we are supporting and advocating for involvement in agriculture week.

When we buy and eat the good things that are grown, harvested and made right here in our province, we feed local economies, support great jobs and help communities grow and succeed. It's why we introduced the Local Food Fund to support innovative local food projects, and it's why we created the Local Food Act, the first legislation of its kind in Canada. That legislation is aimed to increase local food awareness by setting food literacy goals in consultation with agri-food industry partners.

It's also why I challenged the agri-food sector to double its growth rate and create more than 120,000 new jobs by 2020. I would just say that the agri-food industry has really stepped up to this challenge. They are working to set targets and they have plans in place, and I'm very, very proud of the involvement of all in that challenge, because this industry is strong and we want to help to make it stronger.

C'est aussi pourquoi j'ai mis le secteur agroalimentaire au défi de multiplier par deux son taux de croissance et de créer plus de 120 000 nouveaux emplois d'ici à 2020, parce que ce secteur est fort et que nous voulons l'aider à devenir encore plus fort.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the capacity is there. We're seeing that capacity as the organizations set their own targets and rally their members to be involved.

I'm so pleased that Ontario students are taking the opportunity to learn more about the hard work that goes into putting fresh local food on their plates. I want to thank the hard-working folks at Ontario Agri-Food Education, OAFE, for bringing a firm understanding of our agri-food industry to every student in our province. It's through initiatives and partnerships like this that we can ensure that everyone in our cities and towns knows the important role agriculture and our rural communities play in our daily lives.

Please join me in celebrating Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week and thanking Ontario Agri-Food Education for their exceptional work.

Je vous invite à célébrer avec moi la Semaine de sensibilisation à l'agriculture canadienne et à remercier Ontario Agri-Food Education de son travail exceptionnel.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Minister responsible for women's issues as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: For which I stand, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise to recognize this week as International Women's Week, and Saturday as International Women's Day. As minister responsible for women's issues, I'm proud to celebrate the progress that has been made in advancing women's equality around the world and here at home.

This year, Ontario's theme for International Women's Day is "Equality Through Leadership." As the leaders of today, we must continue to push for female equality.

Throughout history, our mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters and our mentors have fought for the right to vote, own land, and in 1929, gained us recognition as persons under the law. Strong women like Agnes Macphail, the first female MP, and the Famous Five, who stood up for equal rights, insisted on equal opportunity and made progress toward equality for all women. If it wasn't for their strong leadership, I wouldn't be here today. It is because of them that I feel an overwhelming sense of responsibility to break down barriers for the next generation.

1320

We've come a long way in Ontario. We now have the first female Premier in our history—and one day we won't have to have that "female" in front of Premier; she'll just be the Premier of Ontario. While this is an important achievement, we must continue to advocate for women in leadership positions. Barriers for women still exist in the corporate world. In Canada, women make up only 16% of the seats on corporate boards. That is unacceptable. Research shows that a stronger economy and equality for women go hand in hand. This has been proven around the world, and it holds true in Ontario as well. The 2013 Catalyst census shows that from 2011 to 2013, female representation on Canadian public companies has increased by 2%. While that's a promising sign, it's evident that there's more to do.

This past summer, our government asked the Ontario Securities Commission to undertake a review and public consultation on a comply-or-explain approach to corporate governance. We did that because there's a stigma in the corporate world that we must work hard to change. The data shows that, when it comes to return on investment, companies with more female directors outperform those with the least by 26%. We've seen that when other countries have adopted a comply-or-explain approach, there has been an increase in female corporate leadership.

As a government and as female role models, we must continue to work hard to break down barriers for the women of today and the leaders of tomorrow.

Thirty years after the creation of the Ontario Women's Directorate, progress has been made toward full economic equality. Today we see more women in senior leadership positions, more women in politics and more women in non-traditional jobs. While that's great, there's a long way to go, and we acknowledge that. Unfortunately, it's still the case that women earn 72 cents for every dollar earned by their male counterpart. We must continue to work together and work hard to address this discrepancy.

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that equality for women is progress for all. It's not a women's issue; it's an economic imperative and a social imperative. I remain committed to that goal. I encourage all Ontarians to participate in their community's events during International Women's Week and to look for ways that they can support women's equality and a brighter future for all Ontarians, not just during International Women's Week or International Women's Day but every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

CANADIAN AGRICULTURE LITERACY WEEK

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy and pleased to rise on behalf of the PC caucus to recognize Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week. We need to do much more to educate people on where our food comes from and how it's produced, as well as increase the knowledge of how it's prepared.

Last year when we held local food round tables around the province, the number one thing that we heard was that we need to increase food education. Today, there are too many people who don't understand how their food is grown, they don't understand the hard work that goes into producing it, and they don't understand the capital investment that farmers make and need to make. They don't consider a career in agriculture because they don't understand the opportunities that are available. In fact, a recent study by Farmers Feed Cities found that only 41% of 18- to 34-year-olds said that they knew where their food comes from.

It's part of a bigger problem of people who are no longer learning about food. Instead of trying to just ban junk food, we should teach students the skills to make smart, balanced choices. Last year, when we put forward an amendment which would have required that food education be taught in all grades, we wanted to ensure all young people had the opportunity to learn nutritional knowledge, basic food skills and where their food comes from.

Just last weekend, I was at a conference organized by the Ontario Home Economics Association. I heard the results of a study that that amendment had found it had 94% support. We heard support for it from all different sectors. But when the Local Food Act went to committee,

the government blocked the amendment. I'm happy that the Premier acknowledges agricultural literacy week today, but I would have preferred instead that she had taken concrete steps to improve agriculture literacy by supporting our amendment. It's not enough to say the right words, Premier. We need action to increase agriculture literacy.

Today, whether a student learns about their food and where it comes from depends too much on which teacher they have. Some have great agriculture knowledge and are working hard to ensure that their students are getting food and agriculture education. There are a number of organizations, such as the Dairy Farmers, Egg Farmers and the Grain Farmers of Ontario, that are working hard to provide speakers and materials to make that possible. I particularly want to recognize Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc. for their work to bring agriculture into the classroom. They act as a resource for teachers looking for quality agriculture information, and they've launched a website, www.growingcareers.ca, that promotes careers in agriculture.

I also want to recognize organizations like FoodShare Toronto, Tastebuds Hamilton and the Ottawa Network for Education, who are raising awareness of agriculture and local food by promoting the Great Big Crunch, which will have people in schools and workplaces eating local apples this afternoon. I know that the PC caucus is looking forward to biting into great Ontario apples at 2:30, because the PC caucus understands the importance of supporting Ontario's farmers and increasing agricultural literacy. We understand how hard our farmers work and how much they contribute to our province. We understand the importance of celebrating events like agriculture literacy week, but I want to assure you that our commitment to agriculture, food and rural Ontario doesn't end when the week does.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise as the critic for women and on behalf of the PC caucus and our leader Tim Hudak today, speaking to observe International Women's Day on March 8. It's an opportunity for all of us to reflect on the many achievements that women of the past, present and the future have, and will accomplish.

This year's Canadian theme for International Women's Day is "Strong Women, Strong Canada, Canadian Women—Creating Jobs One Business at a Time." I think this theme highlights the important role that female entrepreneurs play in driving growth, creating jobs and fostering innovation in the Canadian economy. Women really are making a big impact in business across Canada, with women-owned businesses employing over 1.5 million Canadians. We must look to women who will take on leadership roles in an effort to implement the change and continue to develop the status of women in business, politics and society as a whole.

Judy Dickson from Rosedale, in my riding, will be joining representatives from around the world when she

travels to New York this month to take part in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. I applaud Judy for her dedication.

Another example of Canadian women achieving success on the world stage is, of course, our Olympic athletes. Canadian women won more medals than women from any other country during the 2014 Olympics, including six gold, four silver and one bronze medal. The successes of these women at the Sochi Olympics have inspired our country.

I am proud to celebrate International Women's Day, and I look forward to celebrating many more women's achievements in the future. I hope you all enjoy the many events in your ridings this weekend.

CANADIAN AGRICULTURE LITERACY WEEK

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to stand in this place and speak on behalf of Andrea Horwath and the New Democratic Party in recognition of Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week. As the majority of Canadians become farther and farther removed from the farm, agriculture education becomes more and more important. As a society, we need to know and appreciate where our food comes from.

The third annual agriculture literacy week runs from March 2 to 8. In our great province it's spearheaded by Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc., commonly and affectionately known as OAFE. This dedicated group of volunteers, with funding help from many agricultural organizations, provides learning materials, modules and even agricultural ambassadors to help teachers, providing agriculture info during the week. We would like to commend OAFE for the work it has done over the years.

Although ag literacy week helps focus people on agriculture once a year, we need to promote and educate people all the time. We have hosted many school tours on our dairy farm. The smiles on the kids' and adults' faces are ample proof and reward for our trouble. And, Speaker, those kids ask some very interesting and tough questions like, "Where do cows find grass to eat in the wintertime?" That's a very good question.

1330

Since I've been elected to the Legislature, I've had many conversations with others here about agriculture, and many people at Queen's Park have asked the same questions as the kids on our farm. I found that very eye-opening and very concerning, because that's proof that we need to do so much more to educate people of all ages about the cornerstone industry in this province and about where their food comes from, how it's processed. We need to do so much more.

I know that when we host farm tours—a lot of farmers don't do it anymore because it's so much harder. It's harder to work with the schools. We need to look at ways that we in this Legislature can do things to help the country and city come together so that we understand each other much better and can support each other.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm proud, on behalf of Andrea Horwath and all the women here, to speak about International Women's Day.

Mr. Speaker, it's not about what women can and cannot do. Women can do anything we set our minds to. It's what the government will do along with us. There we have a bit of a problem, because as you heard the minister herself say, we earn 72 cents on the dollar—still. And yet there's a motion on the order paper to make April 9 Equal Pay Day, because that's when women start to make the same amount as men. Why can't we do that simple thing?

Yes, we're under-represented in businesses across this province; there's no question about that. But we're also under-represented in government, and we can do something about that. In fact, in the NDP we have done something about that. We have the highest representation of women in Ontario and in Ottawa. We're proud of that.

Here's the real situation for women on the ground in Ontario: 15,000 of us were turned away from shelters in one year alone. That's under this government. Victim services funding has been slashed year to year per victim under this government for the last almost 11 years. Counselling for their abusive partners has been slashed by this government. Only one out of 10 women in Ontario can find a licensed, safe daycare spot for their children, and that's outrageously expensive. Yet next door are Manitoba and Quebec, which have affordable child care. Why can they do it? Why has this government not done it?

Ultimately, though, I have to end with a note of hope, and that hope is this: I have hope in the women not only in this chamber but, more to the point, the women out there who elected us and sent us here. Those women out there, applying pressure, even with this government, no matter who's in power, will effect change. And we have over the decades. In fact, every time I walk up the steps of this Legislature, I rub the shoulder of Agnes Macphail, the first woman ever elected. We're so proud of Agnes, and I rub it for good luck. It's good luck not just for me, not just for the women here, but for all the women out there and, even more importantly, for our children, our daughters and our grandchildren, that they may have a better government and a better life. Thank you.

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Prince Edward–Hastings on a point of order.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Speaker. Back on February 18, during Thai Pongal celebrations in Ontario's Tamil community, I promised that I would table a bill entitled Tamil Heritage Month Act, Bill 156. I would seek unanimous consent at this time to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 156, An Act to proclaim the month of January Tamil Heritage Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to take a moment to explain to the member that this has been done three times and that it cannot be repeated as often as that

when we have a definitive answer being placed. I will hear it this time and remind the member of my ruling and ask him to reread it. All members should read that ruling.

However, the member from Prince Edward–Hastings is asking to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I heard a no.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

Mr. Speaker, I concur with this petition and I'll affix my name to it.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for northern families;

"Whereas the government has a duty and an obligation to ensure that essential goods and services are affordable for all families living in the north and across the province;

"Whereas government policy such as the Green Energy Act, the harmonized sales tax, cancellation of gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga have caused the price of electricity to artificially increase to the point it is no longer affordable for families or small business;

"Whereas electricity generated and used in north-western Ontario is among the cleanest and cheapest to produce in Canada, yet has been inflated by government policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the price of electricity in the northwest and ensure that residents and businesses have access to energy that properly reflects the price of local generation."

I support this and will affix my signature and give it to the page to deliver.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are over 8,000 children and youth living under the care of the crown and of children's aid societies in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario Legislature hosted the 'Our Voice, Our Turn: Youth Leaving Care Hearings' in the fall of 2011; and

"Whereas these hearings made it clear that more must be done to support these young people and to raise awareness; and

"Whereas by proclaiming May 14 of each year as 'Children and Youth in Care Day,' the province would raise awareness and recognize the unique challenges faced by children and youth living in care; and

"Whereas Ontario's children's aid societies, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and members of the community, including children and youth living in care, want to officially celebrate 'Children and Youth in Care Day' on May 14, 2014; and

"Whereas Bill 53, known as the 'Children and Youth in Care Day Act,' proposed by MPP Soo Wong, passed with unanimous support on May 9, 2013, but has since been delayed from being called for third reading;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call Bill 53 for third reading immediately; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact Bill 53, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act, before May 2014."

Mr. Speaker, I fully support it and give the petition to page Alessia.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions is the result of factors other than Drive Clean, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas the current government has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computer-

ized emissions test that is less reliable, and prone to error; and

"Whereas the Auditor General identified that Drive Clean has had little to no impact on the reduction of emissions in Ontario and that the program's pass rate has exceeded 90% every year since 2004; and

"Whereas the Auditor General's No. 1 recommendation is for the government to 'formally evaluate the extent to which the Drive Clean program continues to be an effective initiative';

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program" in the province of Ontario.

I affix my name in full support.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas escalating rental costs are making Ontario less affordable and leaving many tenants financially insecure or falling into poverty;

"Whereas tenants living in residential apartments and condominiums built after 1991 are not protected within the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) by rent control guidelines, nor are they protected from other arbitrary changes to their rent which currently cannot be appealed to the Landlord and Tenant Board;

"Whereas this has created an unfair two-tier system of tenant protection in Ontario, where some tenants have no protection from large and arbitrary increases;

1340

"Whereas removing these simple exemption loopholes in the RTA law will help protect tenants and help make housing more affordable and secure for thousands of Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario acts to protect all tenants in Ontario and immediately move to ensure that all Ontario tenants living in buildings, mobile home parks and land-lease communities are covered by the rent control guidelines in the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006."

I am proud to affix my signature and give this to page Robin.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: From my constituency of Ajax-Pickering to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham are at the final stages of completing an EA for the YD-WPCP (York Durham water pollution control plant's) outfall; and

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham have chosen as the final solution an alternative which will not address the quantity"—or quality—"of total phosphorus (TP) nor ... reactive phosphorus (SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario; and

"Whereas Lake Ontario has been identified as the most stressed lake of the Great Lakes in the July/August 2013 issue of Canadian Geographic; and

"Whereas the town of Ajax and PACT POW (Pickering Ajax Citizens Together—Protecting our Water) have documented the excessive algae blooms on the Ajax waterfront with photos and complaints to the region of Durham; and

"Whereas SRP, and indirectly TP, contribute to the growth of algae in Lake Ontario;

"Therefore we undersign this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and ask that the government of Ontario require the regions of York and Durham to implement an alternative that will reduce the amount of phosphorus ... being deposited into Lake Ontario from the YD-WPCP."

I will attach my signature to it and pass it to Kiranpreet.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to get a petition on that reads as follows:

"Whereas Hydro One Networks Inc. (Hydro One) is proposing construction of a new transformer station on a 100-acre site in Clarington, near the Oshawa-Clarington boundary;

"Whereas the site is on the Oak Ridges moraine/greenbelt;

"Whereas concerns have been raised about the environmental impacts of this development, including harm to wildlife as well as contamination of ponds, streams and the underground water supply;

"Whereas sites zoned for industrial and/or commercial use are the best locations for large electricity transformer stations;

"Whereas most, if not all, residents do not agree this project is needed and that, if proven to be necessary, it could be best accommodated at alternative locations such as Cherrywood or Wesleyville," or Wilson Road;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Ontario Legislature support the preservation of the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt and the natural environment at this site. We also ask that the Ontario Legislature require the Clarington transformer station to be built"—if necessary—"at an alternative location zoned for an industrial facility and selected in accordance with the best planning principles."

I'm pleased to sign and support this in support of my constituents and present it to page Meera on her last day.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

This is probably about the 10,000th signature. I'm going to add here to this, and I'm going to give it to Kevin, on behalf of the thousand and more dogs that have been killed just because of the way they look.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I've affixed my signature, as I am in agreement with this, to give it to page Jessie.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

"Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the northwest; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund" public "transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area."

I support this and will affix my signature and give it to a page to deliver to the table.

LCBO OUTLET

Mr. Joe Dickson: In concert with the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, I have a petition to present to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas our centrally located downtown LCBO store is scheduled to be relocated to the far west end of town in 2014, we believe that Lindsay can support two LCBO locations; our existing LCBO is ideally located on three transit routes and within walking distance of our waterfront and 80% of our residents. We have support of the local chamber of commerce, BIA and municipal councillors;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge Premier Wynne and our political government representatives to support the residents of downtown and leave the second location open.”

I attach my name to that, Mr. Speaker, as I agree, and I pass it to Jo Jo.

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas cystic fibrosis is a multi-system genetic disease primarily affecting the lungs and digestive system;

“Whereas one in every 3,600 children born in Canada has cystic fibrosis, making it the most common fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children and young adults;

“Whereas there is no cure for cystic fibrosis, but the drug Kalydeco is the first medication that has shown success in targeting the underlying genetic cause of cystic fibrosis for patients with the specific G551D mutation;

“Whereas this drug helps improve the function of the defective protein, leading to better lung function, weight gain, and lower sweat chloride levels and access to Kalydeco could lead to a healthier, longer life;

“Whereas Kalydeco has been approved by Health Canada, but the approximately \$300,000 annual cost makes it an unaffordable treatment option for the overwhelming majority of Ontario families;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care take immediate action to expedite listing Kalydeco on the province’s drug formulary so this treatment is available to Ontario families.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Legislature expressed its unanimous wish to have regulation 316/03 amended to include several categories of all-terrain vehicles; and

“Whereas law-abiding ATV enthusiasts from across the province expect this change in order to be able to use their legitimately owned vehicles recreationally and for participating in significant charity events; and

“Whereas the Minister of Transportation should respect the unanimous will of the Legislature;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately amend regulation 316/03 to allow the operation of two-up all-terrain vehicles.”

I agree with this and will be signing it and passing it off to page Anne.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

“Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

“Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

“Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

“Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services.”

I support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Robin to deliver.

1350

PRIVATE MEMBERS’
PUBLIC BUSINESS

FEDERAL TRANSFER PAYMENTS

Mr. Joe Dickson: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the federal Minister of Finance should treat the people of Ontario fairly and reverse the \$641-million reduction in major federal transfers in 2014-15 and by providing an equitable level of support and immediately stop shortchanging Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise today—I’m just looking at the time; okay—to speak about a subject that has a great impact on all Ontarians: the way in which the federal government is treating our province.

Let me be crystal-clear on my first point, Mr. Speaker: Ontarians are, first and foremost, proud Canadians. We

recognize the principle of equality that binds this great country together. We know that we, as a nation, are stronger when everyone enjoys reasonably comparable levels of public services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation.

We have put our money where our principles are. In fact, for the last 10 years, Ontarians have helped people across this country by contributing approximately \$50 billion to the equalization program—yes, Mr. Speaker, \$50 billion—\$50 billion that has helped other provinces in Canada to pay for their social programs, like hospitals and schools and daycare. We are proud to have helped other provinces. But let us be clear: Equality must be a two-way street. I know that when our province built Highway 16 to Ottawa, we built it both ways.

Speaking of Ottawa, it has recently been said by someone who works in our nation's capital that "Ontario complains when they are not doing well. And when they are doing a little bit better, they still complain. The Ontario economy is modestly better than it was, which means their entitlement to equalization payments is modestly lower. That's all that has happened. It has nothing to do with it being Ontario. It could be any equalization-receiving province."

At least we agree on one thing: Ontario's economy is doing better, thanks to the hard work and dedication of the people of Ontario.

Without complaining, Mr. Speaker, the Ontario government is proud to have done our part in this regard. We have taken strong actions to reduce spending growth, which has allowed us to overachieve on deficit reduction targets four years in a row.

Interjections.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Maybe I should repeat that. It has allowed us to overachieve on deficit reduction targets four years in a row.

Ontario's government undertook important reforms to control spending while maintaining and improving the quality of public services. Ontario has the lowest per capita program spending in Canada. For two years running, growth in program expenses overall has been less than 1%, and last year, total government spending fell for the first time in more than a decade. This has not been easy, and we salute all Ontario residents for their hard work and sacrifice and for their contributions to making not just Ontario but Canada as a whole a better place. Once again I must add: Ontarians did all of this without complaining, Mr. Speaker.

I say that their hard work and tax dollars have benefited all of Canada, and to illustrate my point, I would like to draw upon the research of the Mowat Centre, which bills itself as "Ontario's non-partisan, evidence-based voice on public policy." According to the independent Mowat Centre's report *Filling the Gap*, they estimate the gap between what Ontarians pay to the federal government and the amount returned in services and transfers to be \$11.1 billion, or 1.9% of Ontario's GDP in 2009-10, a trend that continues, Mr. Speaker. In 2014-15, Ontario will contribute approximately \$6.5 billion to the equal-

ization program, while Ontario will receive approximately \$2 billion in return. This is an important point that escapes some who criticize Ontario.

Ontario is an exception. Ontario is the only province that receives equalization payments and yet is also a net contributor to the program. We may receive equalization payments, but it is inaccurate to call us a have-not province. In effect, we are only getting back a fraction of the money we put into the Canadian program: our money, money from Ontario taxpayers.

The government believes that federal-provincial fiscal arrangements must be modernized to be more efficient and fair and to do better in addressing the economic and demographic challenges facing provinces. We are not alone in this belief. The Mowat Centre argues that the fiscal gap between what Ontario pays to Ottawa and what it receives in return is the result of an unfair federal practice towards Ontario in areas such as employment insurance, federal investments in economic development, infrastructure funding, affordable and social housing, support for the energy sector, and funding for labour market training. But these issues are something for another day.

What we must address today is the issue of transfer protection payments. You see, since 2010-11, the federal government has provided total transfer protection, or TTP, payments to ensure provinces do not see a year-over-year decline in the sum of their major transfers—transfers, I may add, that have included money from hard-working Ontarians. Since 2010-11, the federal government has paid out over \$2.2 billion in TTP. Seven out of the 10 provinces—Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan—have all received TTP payments. That would leave British Columbia, PEI and Alberta. However, our friends in Alberta have not experienced a year-over-year reduction in transfers for the past four years.

Remember what I said about equality? Well, compared to 2013-14, major transfers to Ontario, such as equalization, Canada Health Transfer and Canada Social Transfer, will decline by \$641 million this year. In every other year, for every other province that faced a decline in major transfers, they received TTP payments, yet Ontario will not. In December 2013, in letters to provincial and territorial finance ministers, the federal finance minister, Jim Flaherty, wrote that total transfer protection as a temporary measure would no longer be extended. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, and, in fact, I ask all Canadians, is this fair? Is this treating all provinces equally? Ontario is the only province that will experience a year-over-year decline in the sum of its major transfers in 2014-15. The year that Ontario is facing such a decline, the federal government has decided to end the practice of total transfer protection.

We expect the federal government to treat Ontarians fairly by allowing them to keep more of their own money, just like Canadians anywhere across the country. We expect the federal government to live up to their

practice of providing one-time payments to provinces subjected to undue cuts. At a minimum, Ontarians should have \$641 million returned to them.

Let me be clear: The people of Ontario are not asking for a handout. We continue to be proud Canadians willing to contribute to other provinces to ensure that all Canadians receive adequate services. We are simply asking to receive money that is rightfully ours, money that hard-working Ontario residents have generated through their hard work, determination and perseverance as we battle back from the worst recession since the Great Depression, which was about 80 years ago.

1400

This government will continue to stand up for Ontario and invest in the priorities of our people: strong public services, a strong economy and a strong future for our province.

That's why I stand in this House and put forward the following statement to the provincial Legislature, and I will read that again: "That, in the opinion of the House, the federal Minister of Finance should treat the people of Ontario fairly and reverse the \$641-million reduction in major federal transfers in 2014-15 and by providing an equitable level of support and immediately stop short-changing Ontarians."

I thank you for that, Mr. Speaker. I do have a couple of other comments, if I may. I just worked at a couple of items that show what \$641 million would buy. That's our \$641 million.

It would buy nearly 2.6 million ER visits. It would buy prenatal and childbirth care for more than 100,000 women; more than 128,000 cardiac surgeries; nearly 600,000 acute in-patient days in hospitals; or almost 2.5 million hours of MRI scans. I can tell you something: That's very important for us, because we in Ajax-Pickering, after 60 years, now have an MRI, which we didn't have previously.

More specifically, by shortchanging Ontario, the federal government is sending a strong message about its priorities, priorities that don't include timely access to key medical procedures; reducing chronic disease and death resulting from smoking; and providing life-saving vaccines.

Here are just a few examples of unfair cuts that we now face. Under the Patient Wait Times Guarantee Trust, Ontario received \$205.4 million over three years to support reduced wait times for key procedures like cancer, cataract surgeries, cardiac care, radiation therapy, hip and knee replacements, MRI and CT scans. The funding expired and was not renewed.

These cuts put at great risk the great work we've done to reduce wait times, work that was recognized by the Wait Time Alliance's June 2013 report card, which gave Ontario straight A's for reducing wait times for hip, knee, cancer, cataract, and cardiac surgeries for the third year in a row.

This is exceptional. It shows you how much has been done by the province, and we would like to continue that by requesting our \$641 million back in the hands of the residents of the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I do appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion. Let me say at the outset that I disagree with it in the strongest manner possible, and I certainly will not be supporting this motion.

As many people know, I know the federal Minister of Finance quite well, and I'm very concerned about the premise of this motion, which would suggest that he is not treating Ontario fairly. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth.

I watched the press conference that was attended by both the member from Ajax-Pickering and the Minister of Health, and I found it very confusing, because the minister was clearly mixing up two very different concepts, one being the concept of the equalization payments and the other being the level of federal health transfer payments. It somehow suggested that the change in equalization payments was somehow going to result in a reduction in health spending and, therefore, health services in Ontario. That is simply not correct.

The reality is that the equalization formula is a mathematical calculation that's applied equally to all of the provinces. It has no effect—it's not partisan. It applies equally to all the provinces, and you simply have to follow the formula.

For anybody who is watching this debate, I would urge you to go onto the Finance Canada website, where you can see the actual calculations that have been set out very clearly, and the calculations that are used in order to get to those final numbers.

The fact of the matter is that the tax base in Ontario has increased by 8% since the recession, and that is why the payments are changing for the next year. It's a simple mathematical formula.

Of course, that has nothing to do with the federal health transfers, which the minister spoke about at her press conference and which the member referenced during his debate comments, but the federal transfers for health have not decreased at all. In fact, they've increased dramatically since 2006, when the Harper government was elected. The increase has been \$4.6 billion, or a 60% increase to Ontario since 2006.

In the 2007 federal budget, it was announced that health transfers would continue to increase under the existing formula until 2014-15, at which time the transfers would be made on an equal per capita cash basis.

I'd like to quote something that Mr. McGuinty, the former Premier—who this government is trying to distance themselves from right at the moment—in 2009, he said, "The federal government has also addressed an outstanding concern related to the Canada Health Transfer. We are now going to be treated the same as Canadians in the rest of the country when it comes to the funding that we receive for the Canada Health Transfer." That was then. He agreed with it, and that's what is happening.

For example, 2013-14, the amount that Ontario received under the Canada Health Transfer was \$11.925

billion. In 2014-15, that will increase to \$12.335 billion. So any suggestion that there are going to be cuts to health payments to Ontario is completely false. They are going to be increasing and then will be calculated on a per capita cash basis going forward. We're left to wonder why this motion is coming forward when it's made on a factually incorrect basis.

I would venture to say that they're looking for someone else to blame for their own financial mismanagement of Ontario's finances. I think you could really sum it up in two words: gas plants. When you look at the money that's been squandered—\$1 billion spent for purely partisan purposes to get a few Liberal members elected, eHealth, the Ornge scandal—I think we can see that the money has been squandered and they're looking for someone to blame. I would suggest if any blame is to be apportioned, this government should look at themselves in the mirror.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm pleased to be able to rise and speak to the motion that's been put forward by the member for Ajax-Pickering, which asks the federal government and the federal Minister of Finance to "immediately stop shortchanging Ontarians" and reverse the planned \$641-million reduction in federal transfer payments in 2014-15. As many of us know, these federal transfer payments, often referred to as equalization payments, help address some of the fiscal imbalances that exist across the country by redistributing money from the prosperous provinces to those that are less profitable.

First I need to state that, let's face it, Ontario could probably really use this money, and it's certainly a lot easier to deal with the considerable financial challenges that we have in this province with more money. But, at some point, the madness needs to stop.

Since coming to power in 2003, the Liberals have spent and spent and spent, and they haven't had very much to show for it. Sure, they have a long list of scandals such as eHealth, Ornge, the gas plants, exorbitant executive salaries, and other boondoggles to show for their time in office. But at a time when the people in this province are struggling just to keep afloat, to pay their hydro bills and have some money left over to put some groceries on the table, and with significant infrastructure renewal challenges for municipalities and First Nations communities that lack basic essential services such as clean drinking water, safe and healthy homes and sufficient electricity, the Liberals have a blank sheet of successes. They have nothing to show for it.

Not only that, but the economic outlook of this province has turned almost bleak. Once the economic engine of Confederation, Ontario has taken a long, embarrassing tumble to have-not status under this Liberal government. It needs to be stated that prior to 2009-10, Ontario wasn't even receiving equalization payments. It's only under the Liberals that Ontario has become a have-not province.

It's a sorry fact that this Liberal government, in its 10 years in office, managed to nearly double the debt that

Ontario had incurred since Confederation. The Minister of Infrastructure may do well to listen to this statistic because it bears repeating: In 10 years, this group of Liberals has doubled the debt that it took Ontario 136 years to accumulate. That is beyond shameful; that is reprehensible.

1410

So instead of this government appealing cap in hand to the federal government to maximize the aid it receives, it should be focusing on creating jobs, making life more affordable, balancing the books and paying down some of this atrocious debt. Instead of relying on equalization payments from the federal government—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Vaughan, would you come to order, please.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: —why are the Liberals not focusing on strengthening Ontario's economy? Are they not confident that they can lead us out of this financial disparity? Why are they expecting us to remain a have-not province? Where is their plan? Or are the Liberals simply relying on these equalization payments to help ease the pain of their astounding debt load and the mismanagement of so many wasted tax dollars?

While I appreciate the position that this Liberal government is in, in respect to Ontario's financial affairs, it is reckless and irresponsible to continue to throw more and more money at the problem, which in this case is the Liberals.

I want to close by addressing some of the criticisms that New Democrats have received from the Progressive Conservatives and the Liberals as of late. There seems to be some confusion on the part of the PCs and the Liberals about the values that New Democrats hold and have held with respect to fiscal management. To address this, I would like to borrow a story about Tommy Douglas that was recently relayed to me by my colleague and seatmate, the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Tommy Douglas, the first federal leader of the NDP and Canada's greatest Canadian, was known for many accomplishments. Most notably, he was known for bringing medicare, first to his home province and then the country. But before that, he electrified rural Saskatchewan.

One thing that he is little known for or that is often overlooked is that what Tommy Douglas did before all of this was balance the books. The reality is that before we can build up this province and make many of the necessary larger-scale investments, we need to get our financial house in order, and that is a value that New Democrats believe and will continue to insist upon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to say that it gives me great pleasure to support my colleague the member for Pickering-Ajax on his motion—and it does—but I can't believe the conversation I'm hearing this afternoon. I guess I so value and so respect the power of private members' bills to bring this Legislature together on so

many disparate issues, and I can't believe the political posturing as a result of this fair-share conversation that my colleague has brought up when it comes to funding from the federal government. I'm so disappointed by the members from Whitby-Oshawa and Kenora-Rainy Rivers to make this political football—the language and the messaging that's coming from the federal government—and bringing it to this House. It is so disrespectful of what's happening during this Thursday afternoon of private members' bills.

I want to congratulate the member from Ajax-Pickering for bringing this motion forward and for fighting for Ontario. It's really important that we fight for our fair share for Ontario. Everyone in this House is supposed to be doing that.

The issue of securing Ontario's fair share is a recurring theme. It touches my ministry, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Social housing projects from Windsor to Ottawa, from Toronto to Kenora, will also lose federal funding in the near future, so I'm happy to have a conversation about this issue.

While I'm pleased to acknowledge that the federal government has committed to renewing the investment in affordable housing for another four years, here's what worries me: There's another, larger stream of money—because there are two pots of money; there's the new housing, and then there's the refurbishment money. That's the part that's currently going towards existing costs for social housing, and that number is drying up.

If Ottawa doesn't change course, these subsidies are scheduled to evaporate. Federal social housing funding to Ontario will decrease by \$1.3 billion over the next 10 years. The outlook is clear to us that the money is going away. That's a 50% reduction in funding. By 2033, it will be completely gone. Some communities have already seen their funds disappear.

The loss of these subsidies will have a very real impact on all of our residents and this Legislature. It means that Ontario and municipalities will be left footing the bills. Whether or not you like Liberals, our communities are going to be hurt by these decisions. We want to help as a government, but we can't make up the difference, especially with the most recent withdrawal of federal financial assistance in other areas.

The federal government is pulling back in a number of areas, and no matter what the messaging is that's coming from the opposite side, funding for patient wait-time reduction initiatives has gone down. Money for hiring front-line police officers and money for transportation funding for First Nation youth in need of specialized treatment outside of their communities—all those dollars have gone down. We just can't stand by. I won't stand by and let that happen.

Last week I spoke at the ROMA-OGRA conference, and I asked every mayor, reeve, councillor and CEO who came to see me to take a letter back to their councils. Collectively, I wanted us to work together. We need to stand shoulder to shoulder with those communities to ask Minister Jason Kenney to come back to the table, to

come back and meet with the provincial and territorial ministers to discuss the need for a national housing plan.

I received a very warm reception. I think all councillors, without exception, said they would do that. When that meeting does happen, I intend to bring to the minister's attention all the cuts that Ottawa is making, from housing to health to transfer payment protection. At the end of the day, Canadians—Ontarians—need their federal and provincial governments to work together in partnership.

It's time for the federal government to recognize that the cost of housing is taking a toll on families and communities across Canada. There's something so difficult about this job, and part of that is thinking of a child or family that has not got a place to call home. They have no place to go to sleep that night, no roof over their head. Without a place to call home, families suffer. For the sake of Canada's economic stability and growth, we need a national housing plan.

When families have a house to call their home, everything improves: their health care, their education and their employment. Both social and affordable housing are essential components of a strong overall housing market, and a strong housing market creates jobs and grows the economy. All governments have a role in making sure that that happens.

That's the business case we're making to the federal government, and we urge them to return to the table as a long-term partner. They used to be our housing partner. It appears as if the federal government is walking away from that role and that responsibility. I believe that's just shameful. Our government is calling on the federal government to engage and come back to the table. At the end of the day, housing isn't just a municipal issue, a provincial issue or a federal issue; it's a societal issue. We all own it, and we must tackle it together.

I'm proud to stand up today with my colleague from Ajax-Pickering, supporting my colleague, and I invite all the members in this House to reconsider some of their positions. Join us. Come together. Work together for all Ontarians and have Canada's most vulnerable taken care of by the representatives of this House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I must start off by saying that the member and his government have some nerve bringing this motion forward to the floor of this Legislature. The premise of this motion, that Ontario somehow is being shortchanged by Canada, is borderline sacrilege.

The truth is that the McGuinty-Wynne government is shortchanging Canada by failing to provide the leadership and the economic and fiscal stability that has led Confederation for more than a century. The notion that Ontario is even complaining about receiving equalization payments doesn't just infuriate me; it's an insult to Canadians across this country.

Ontario shouldn't be in a position to receive federal transfer payments on equalization, period. That's the bottom line. The McGuinty-Wynne government, through

their disregard for taxpayers' money and through careless and scandalous spending, has turned the economic engine of Confederation into a have-not province, therefore needing equalization payments in the first place.

This government can't get their hands on enough of other people's money, whether it's the Ontario taxpayers, the ratepayers or federal transfer payments from other provinces. Let's look at some of the cold, hard facts—something that this party will not do. Federal support to Ontario has actually increased by \$8.3 billion, or 76%, to a total of \$19.1 billion, in 2014-15. Ontario has already received \$10 billion in equalization payments from Ottawa, including \$3.3 billion this year. And even though they have received \$10 billion of equalization money, they still can't balance a budget. Ontario's economy is improving in areas, relative to other receiving provinces, leading to a decline in the province's equalization. That's how equalization is supposed to work. Ontario, now a have-not province, should celebrate the day equalization payments are actually zero. That will be a great day for Ontario, when we've finally turned this province around from the wreck that this government has turned it into.

1420

The argument that Ontario is a net contributor to equalization is overly simplistic, as federal revenues are more concentrated in provinces with higher relative income, given the progressive tax structure, while federal programs, such as equalization, employment insurance and old age security, provide greater funding to lower-income provinces. The bottom line in all of this is that the Wynne government is so bad at managing its finances that next year we'll have a deficit more than three times the size of the federal government.

If this province's finances and economy were being managed properly, Ontario would not need to be receiving any of these equalization payments. This feud that the Liberals have started with Ottawa is nothing more than an attempt to distract from their own dismal fiscal record and the financial trouble this province is in. If anyone is shortchanging Ontario, it's the Liberal-NDP coalition, whose continued out-of-control spending is now threatening the things we care about, including front-line health care services and education.

Just as the Liberals were less than truthful about the cost of the gas plant scandal and their plan to balance the budget, they're not telling Ontarians the truth about this issue. If this motion wasn't so maddening, the member just might be laughed out of this Legislature for bringing this forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to withdraw the statement "less than truthful."

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak to motion 62, and I will be supporting it.

I have to say that we've had these debates since 1990, when I was here. Unfortunately, when the federal Con-

servative government was there, they whacked Ontario and they whacked us bad. The member from Nipissing wasn't here at the time. I don't know whether he was in municipal politics then. But the reality is, federal governments tend to whack Ontario on a regular basis. It's just a fact. It's not about complaining; it's about talking about a reality that has been with us for a long, long time.

In 1990, when we were in the grip of a serious recession, Bob Rae used to complain about the fact that the federal Conservative Party cut the transfer payments and cut them viciously, because they used to pay for most of the transfer payments connected to social assistance, and when we got into power, they slashed them by half.

I understand that the Tories, most of whom have not been around for too long, don't remember that and may not appreciate the fact that what I'm speaking to is a reality. But we neither had the Tories supporting us and, dare I say, we didn't have the Liberals supporting us either at that time. While it should be a non-partisan thing, the fact of the matter is, whoever is there is attacked for complaining about the transfer payments being decimated by federal governments.

It is sad that we can't join in together when that happens, but that was the reality of the 1990s, and it still happens.

The member from Oshawa says—Oshawa?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Whitby—Oshawa.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Whitby—Oshawa talks about the equalization formula being fair, as if somehow there's some mathematical formula that is politically fair. There's no such thing. There isn't a formula that's created by politicians designed to be fair. Some provinces will get some benefits; other provinces are going to get whacked. Ontario usually gets whacked. That's just the reality of politics in this country.

When it comes to the \$650 million that Ontario is asking for, I think it's a fair request. Other provinces got their dollars; Ontario was expecting to get its money. Lo and behold, the federal Tories said, "Naw. We're cutting you off." My view is, it's not right and it's not fair. It doesn't matter what government was there that was doing the cutting; it's just not fair.

The point and the problem is that Ontario contributes an incredible amount of money to the country, and we get either little or less back in the province of Ontario. But it's no different, by the way, I would add, in terms of the pecking order of abuse—what the feds do to us, we do to the cities. You understand, Speaker, because you were there. Toronto used to say, "We contribute the bulk of the money to Ontario, but we do not get a commensurate amount of money based on the contribution we make to the province," and they're right. But we only focus on the fact that the federal government is abusing their power. We don't focus on how we the province abuse ours vis-à-vis municipalities. You get my point, Speaker.

That is something that we have to be careful about because there's a little bit of irony and paradoxical argumentation when we attack one level but we do the same to the other level that we control.

Just for the record; it's important to point these things out. I know you'd rather not hear it or that you'd rather me not say it, but it is a fact of life. The point I make is, you have to be careful because the same arguments you make with the federal government, you have to then be respectful of the municipal government. It's that disrespect of the municipal government that we sometimes have to deal with.

Dare I talk about the OMB? We did expect the minister to reform the OMB in some way, and there is no OMB reform.

The Minister of Housing had a meeting with 400 people in the development industry. They had three items: development charges, parkland allocation and section 37. The minister comes out of the meeting, and what does she say? "The only changes we're going to make are parkland allocation in terms of discussion, changes to section 37, and"—you get the third point.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: What about inclusionary zoning?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Inclusionary zoning: That would take another hour.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I hope you're going to tie this all back to the bill that's in front of us.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My colleague talks about inclusionary zoning and says the minister could do this today and we would be having housing for those least fortunate in our society. But that's another discussion. I agree with you.

The point I make is that here we have the city of Toronto saying, "Free us from the Ontario Municipal Board," and we can't get a hearing from the government. They said, "No, no. That's not up for discussion. We're reviewing the OMB, but that matter is not up for debate." You understand?

The development industry summoned her—I beg your pardon—invited her to a meeting. They dictated the terms, and she left saying, "Okay." As Rosario Marchese would say, it's about the pecunia. Right? They make huge contributions to the Liberal Party, and they make huge contributions to my fine Tory friends. In fact, when they were in power, the bulk of the money went to the Tories. Now that the Liberals are in power—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the member to bring the discussion back to the motion.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, through you, now that the Liberals are in power, they divide that pie equally. God bless them.

We support this motion. I didn't get a chance to speak to the overachievement component of the Liberal Party. There are so many other problems that my colleague spoke to earlier about some of the incompetence of the government, but that's for another time when we have more time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: This is a great opportunity. I see how much time I have left to speak, and I'm a little bit disappointed, to some extent, that I don't have more because there's so much ground I'd love to cover, given

what I've heard from most of the speakers from across the way.

But I do want to begin by congratulating my colleague the member from Ajax-Pickering for bringing forward this motion. I would have hoped that, before members opposite, save and except perhaps the last speaker, the member for Trinity-Spadina—I would have hoped that the members opposite would have actually read the motion before they got up to sort of twist and contort and distort what is, in fact, actually written into the motion.

1430

The member from Ajax-Pickering specifically is talking about a cut of \$641 million, with respect to reversing the \$641-million reduction in major federal transfers in 2014. With not too much research or effort, I'm sure members opposite could have learned that the \$641 million to which he refers in this particular motion is in regards to something known as the total transfer protection program. That is a program that existed here in Canada, a federal government program that was designed to help stabilize situations when there would be fluctuations in equalization. This past year would have been the first opportunity for our province to actually qualify for this potential effectively stabilization program and, coincidentally, the federal Conservative government chose this precise moment in the program's history to actually eliminate the program, just as Ontario was actually prepared to qualify for the program. So, again, bearing in mind very clearly that we are referring, and the member from Ajax-Pickering is referring, clearly, to that rash and reckless decision made by the federal Prime Minister and, more disturbingly, a decision made by a federal finance minister who represents a riding here in Ontario—that is something that is perhaps most troubling.

It was also interesting for me to listen to the member from Whitby-Oshawa and also the member from Nipissing stand up and speak. Every time I have the chance to hear the Conservatives speaking in this House, I'm always struck by their inability to grasp simple facts or accept simple math and simple facts. I guess if you take a look back at recent history in the province of Ontario, it's not surprising they would have such an aversion to facts and information, given that, back in 2003 when this government was first elected, the people of Ontario found that, in fact, that government, that former Conservative government, had not been forthright with the people of Ontario when they campaigned on claiming that Ontario had balanced books. Instead, we had a \$6-billion deficit, so it's not shocking to me to hear the members from Nipissing—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the member from Vaughan to withdraw.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Sorry, Speaker. Okay. I will withdraw. I'm not quite sure what I'm withdrawing, but that's fine. I'll withdraw. Let me talk about the \$6-billion hidden deficit that folks from that party—it's interesting to me that a member from that caucus would stand as if to deny simple historical facts. At the end of the day, what we are talking about is an expectation—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Northumberland–Quinte West, if you'd come to order. I'm trying to listen to the speaker.

Mr. Steven Del Duca:—not simply an expectation that we have on this side of the House but I believe an expectation that every single Ontario resident has, and deservedly so: that members who were elected to this chamber to represent our respective communities would share one thing in common, and that is an absolute determination to stand up and fight for the people of this province. What the member from Ajax–Pickering has asked us to do today is support a motion that says, "Let's work together. Let's ignore partisanship and partisan lines. Let's stand together and defend the people of Ontario." What's shocking to me, what's shocking—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. To the member from Northumberland–Quinte West: If I am to listen to the speaker and gather everything he's saying, and you're interrupting, it makes it most difficult, because your voice does travel across the floor. I asked you to come to order.

Member for Vaughan, carry on.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Speaker. So as I was saying, what's shocking for the people who are watching at home, and this coming weekend, as we have a break coming up here from the Legislature, when I'm talking to residents in my community, what will be shocking for them to learn is that members of that particular caucus—and actually, the member from Kenora–Rainy River, who spoke from the NDP caucus a little bit earlier, seems unwilling—collectively, they seem unwilling to stand up and fight for the people of Ontario when we put forward this notion that we're seeking fairness from the federal government. I believe there are 107 MPs who represent the province of Ontario in the federal Parliament. Many of them are Conservatives, some are NDP, some are Liberals. I say, why aren't the 107 of them, all of them, standing up in agreement with the government here at Queen's Park because of this motion that we're putting forward to say, "Stand up and fight for your province"? They're unwilling to do it. It's a little bit shocking to me. I was delighted to hear the member from Trinity–Spadina's opening, the first number of minutes that he was up speaking, as he often does very eloquently, standing up to let us know he supports the thrust of the motion—it's unfortunate that, near the end of his remarks, he kind of lost me and, I think, frankly lost the direction that he had originally undertaken with respect to his support.

It's really important for us to remember that nothing good comes of a Conservative Party, be it provincially or federally, that is consistently talking down Ontario, that is consistently encouraging business not to invest in our province, be it the federal finance minister, Mr. Flaherty, or be it the current leader of the official opposition in his efforts to make sure that Ontario's auto industry doesn't continue to thrive—and we see evidence of that this week. To consistently listen to members from the Con-

servative Party at both levels of government talk down Ontario is something that is not helpful.

We even had other classic examples in recent history. When Premier Wynne decided that it was really important to talk to the rest of the Premiers about enhancing the Canada Pension Plan, what happened? The federal government said, "We don't care what the provinces think. We don't care about fairness. We're not going to do it," and, again, from the Conservative opposition here at Queen's Park, no support for a pan-Canadian solution to enhancing retirement security, and no support thus far for Ontario going it alone to make sure those who retire in our province in years to come have more support.

There is still time for my friends across the way to change their minds, see the light, stand with us, stand with the member from Ajax–Pickering, stand up to the federal government and fight for fairness in our country, and I urge all members opposite to join with us to do so.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and hopefully you will be able to hear a few points that I would like to get across this afternoon regarding ballot item number 76.

The honourable member from across the way has made some statements regarding us on this side of the House not wanting to work for or fight for all of Ontario and the hard-working people of this great province. I would have to strongly disagree with that. That's one of the reasons that we here on this side of the House come here day in and day out: to hold this government—who, quite frankly, every time you turn around, tend to blame the federal government for their mismanagement, their fiscal scandals that have occurred and why this province is in the debt that it's in.

This government has had 11 years to get their fiscal house in order. They have failed to do so, yet they turn around at every moment—I would like to get from Hansard sometime, if we could, a word count of every time the Liberal government mentions the federal government and what a bad group of individuals we have up in Ottawa: "They're not giving us our fair share of money."

This government, to me, Mr. Speaker—I'll use the analogy of a spoiled little kid in the candy store. Just because the parent says that you're not allowed to have some jubes or a lollipop or an ice cream cone, this government turns around, they stomp their feet and make accusations that we're not getting our fair share of funds.

This government has had 11 years, as I mentioned, to get their fiscal house in order. They haven't done that. What we have seen is scandal after scandal after scandal. This government has spent more money on scandals—I would like to get some research done on this. I don't want to be presumptuous and say that this is a fact to the member's point, but I would have to say that this government has spent more money on scandals than any other government in recent memory.

I want to talk about, in the final seconds that I have here: This government has made enormous OMPF cuts in

my riding. They're jeopardizing the viability of several programs in the region, and I just want to quickly read these numbers out. For the municipality of Trent Hills: funding cuts, \$114,000; upload increases, \$1,000. So that's a total funding cut of \$113,000. That is fact. I could go on. I have it here: all the other municipalities that are getting cuts. It's a travesty, Mr. Speaker.

1440

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ajax-Pickering, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Joe Dickson: First of all, I'd like to acknowledge and thank very much the members from Whitby-Oshawa and Kenora-Rainy River, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the member from Nipissing, the member from Trinity-Spadina, and I'm just looking directly east of Durham region to see my riding, and it's Northumberland etc.—

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Quinte West.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Quinte West.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Mr. Rinaldi would be extremely upset with you.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I just think of the last time you and I sat at an airport.

Mr. Speaker, a number of things: I heard Ornge mentioned; I heard eHealth mentioned. I have to tell you, back in those days, eHealth was actually started by the Conservatives, and that's a good thing, because I went out to a country doctor 14 years ago and he said, as he pulled out his computer, "Mr. Dickson, you had a heart attack. Good thing I knew that, because I am going to change your medication." So I give credit where credit is due. I give credit to my colleagues across the floor. They had some difficult times because there was a major recession in the early 1990s, and that was seriously impacting a lot of things.

I would like to just close by saying that this is just about stopping the federal government from short-changing Ontarians and reversing the \$641-million cut to major federal transfers. These cuts are hurting families, businesses, but particularly seniors across this province, and so much so that as seniors grow in age and numbers, that's going to be more seriously impacted. I call on all my colleagues from all parties to support this motion. It's a fair deal for Ontario. Let's do it as a combined common front, and I appreciate everyone's support here today. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRE

Mr. Holyday moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 160, An Act to amend the Financial
Accountability Officer Act, 2013 with respect to reports

concerning alternative service delivery of public services / Projet de loi 160, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2013 sur le directeur de la responsabilité financière en ce qui concerne les rapports portant sur la mise en place d'autres modes de prestation des services publics.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Twelve minutes seems like an awful lot of time, but I guess it probably won't be when we finally conclude.

What I wanted to do, I guess, was to tell the members of the House a bit of the history of myself and this issue, because it goes right back to the very start for me, in 1982, when I was first elected. It wasn't long before I started to recognize as a member of council out in Etobicoke that some things were being done in a very expensive manner and that they probably could be done in a better way. But, at the time, there just didn't seem to be the political will to make the changes that could have saved tax dollars.

In the second year, though—this was 1984—there was a system of negotiating in the city of Toronto, with the six separate cities, and I think they used to take turns striking the various municipalities. They wouldn't all strike one year, but they would take turns. In 1984, it became Etobicoke's turn to have a civic workers strike, which of course is known as a garbage strike. It went on for a month or so. In the end, the workers went back to work. They didn't receive one cent more than they would have had if they hadn't have gone out at all. But it was their turn to go out, and out they went. That really upset me then about, you know, how could services be withheld like this and for no good—on either side, actually, and a lot of disruption to the residents of the city of Etobicoke. We fought that strike valiantly. We filled our parks with garbage, and the residents did a noble job of doing what was asked of them. But after all was said and done, it was a mess. The thing went on for the whole month of June and into July. Parks weren't able to be used. Our camps didn't operate. A lot of our swimming pools and other things were affected by it.

But it made me really, really think, so I started to look into the matter of garbage collection, just to see if it was done differently anywhere else. When I looked into the matter, I found that most municipalities in Canada and the United States collected their garbage with a private contractor.

There were a couple of reasons for it. One was that you had a contract with that contractor that they had to post security to guarantee that they would perform and that they would do the job. If they didn't, you would take that bond and cash it and you'd hire other people or buy trucks and get back into the business yourself.

Even though it seemed like a pretty good way of handling the matter, they refused to do it. The fact of the strike was that it always comes down to garbage. The union always plays the contract out to the very end. In the end, it's harder to handle in June than it is in January, and they didn't seem to have a strategy to change all that.

As we go into the story a bit, I'm going to tell you how we did change that with the city of Toronto. It could have been changed in Etobicoke back in 1982, but it never was.

I struck a committee to review the garbage collection of Etobicoke, but after all was said and done, council just received my report and no action was taken. But that went along, I guess, until 1993. By that time, even our management staff were absolutely fed up with what was going on there. We had to hire five employees to do the work of four, because the absenteeism was atrocious. We never knew when they were coming to work or whether we could send the trucks out. Of course, the trucks have to go out every day—it's garbage day; you've got to pick up the garbage—but we never knew if we could do it or not. When you added up all the statutory holidays, all the general holidays that people had, and all the sick days and other things that came into play with days off, we actually had to have a fifth person for every four, just to be able to do that job. So it was very, very expensive.

There were a lot of things in the contract that had been left over from the very, very beginning, only because people had always done it that way. When Etobicoke was a small little area around Islington and Dundas, it had one garbage truck. The truck went out in the morning, picked up half the area and came back to the yard, which was at the centre. They had their lunch and then went out in the afternoon and dumped, and then went out and picked up the next half.

As the city grew—and it grew to 12 miles up and five miles wide—everybody came back to the yard at lunch, no matter where they were. At that time, you were picking up garbage with a driver and two loaders, so you've got three people coming in from Rexdale or coming up from the lakeshore or coming in from all over, and wasting all this time and money. It was just something that was in the contract that we couldn't seem to get out.

In the end, we finally got to the point where we could make a direct comparison. We were willing to listen to our own workers, who could have put a price in and could have done this work, if that's what they wanted to do. In the end, they chose not to do it. It wasn't anti-union at all, because we ended up with the Teamsters. The Teamsters were the workers for the contractor for the first seven years, and they did an exceptional job. They did a very good job.

One of the reasons that, even with the Teamsters, we didn't have the strike risk was because the Teamsters workers became kind of a party to the agreement. They had a contract with the contractor where dates matched the contractor's dates with the city. So if we had them on for seven years, they had a work agreement for seven years. Now, there were escalations along the way and improvements and so on, on both sides of this, but there was no chance for a legal strike to occur within the dates of that contract, and of course there wasn't.

The odd time there will be a strike with a contractor involved, but it invariably comes about because the city

or the jurisdiction has changed the dates of the contract. In the end, they've decided they want to try something different, and they'll extend a contract for a year outside of its normal dates, which then does give the union an opportunity to try to make some hay, and sometimes they do it. But it's nothing like the strikes that we've had here in the city of Toronto.

Anyway, after going through that in 1994, we did contract out the garbage. We took the money from the sale of the trucks and set it in a reserve in case something went wrong and we had to get back in it, but we never did have to get back in it.

We didn't, holus-bolus, throw people out the door. We early-retired some people, and we transferred some people to other sections. The contractor picked up some of the good workers, and they were happy as heck to have a good job with the Teamsters.

In the end, after that very first year, the city of Etobicoke saved \$1 million. This was a city with a population of 330,000, and \$1 million was a big savings. Now, in today's dollars, that's well over \$2 million. It has gone on since 1995, just because we took that action at that time.

1450

The point I'm trying to make with this is that this is not a matter of anybody's ideology, political philosophy or anything else. It's just a matter of management. From my standpoint, I don't care who does the work. As a matter of fact, I wouldn't even mind if our own workers did the work, as long as we've competed them and we know that we're getting a fair price for a fair job. But if we don't compete them and we just continue to go the way we've always gone, prices escalate and you have no control over what you're paying.

From my standpoint, if it's a Teamsters union that does it, fine; if it's a CUPE union doing it, fine; or if it's somebody who doesn't even have a union, that's fine, as long as we know we're getting the best value for the tax dollar. I think that's what it's all about, being down here. You're just down here to make the decisions on behalf of the people you represent. That really is the thrust of what this is about.

I know some people are going to try to say there's a political philosophy involved in this, but the political philosophy that's involved in it is on the side of people who want to protect the interests of special-interest groups. I suggest to you that that's not the best way to look after the taxpayers' interest. The best way to look after the taxpayers' interest is to see if there's not a better way to provide the services that we provide and save money doing it. That's exactly what happened with the garbage in Etobicoke, where the people's service was as good as or better than it had been all along. They really didn't care. They put their pails out in the morning when they went to work, and they came home and the pails were empty at night, and that's all they cared about. They didn't care who took it away; they didn't know, and it didn't matter. But if we could save that kind of money, that's what we should be doing.

Streaming forward now to 2012 in the city of Toronto, we finally got it done there, and they saved \$11 million on the residential collection, and they've saved even more millions on picking up on the streets and picking up in the parks, and other things that were also included in that contract. It's estimated that the total savings in the city of Toronto is between \$30 million and \$35 million annually.

Now, I went there in 1998 and tried to convince them of this, that they should be doing this. They would not listen. It wasn't until 2010, with the new mayor and a more receptive council, that we finally took a look at the matter. Those people had been coming up here, the people from the city of Toronto, all the time since 1998, begging for grants to balance their operating budget. They could have done a lot to help themselves, but they wouldn't take that action. They just simply would not look at a better way of doing it for a better price.

This is just asking the accountability officer to review the matter. It's not me reviewing it; it's not the Conservatives reviewing it; it's not anybody else in this House reviewing it. It's an independent source, somebody that we all have faith in and trust, the accountability officer. It's asking them to review service delivery situations where they think alternate service delivery might provide a benefit, and then they can report back to this House and this House can make a decision on the matter.

That's about what I'm asking you to do today. I appreciate your attentiveness. I thank you very much for listening, and I hope you do the right thing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's interesting. I was listening intently to the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore. He said that if we don't support Bill 160, it's because we are more concerned with the special interests. Here on this side of the House, we don't consider the people of this province as a special-interest group. We consider them as the people who we are elected here to serve. We brought the Financial Accountability Officer role to the budget discussion last spring because it is needed, and there are so many cases.

I think there are two main issues, though, with the way that this bill has come to the floor. Quite honestly, the PCs are trying to solve a problem that doesn't exist. There are lots of problems, actually, in the province of Ontario that do need our collective attention. We clearly have some issues around the safety of workers in the province of Ontario. We have a desperate shortage of child care. We have an underground economy which is problematic on several different levels. We have a disconnect between where we are investing our money in research and the commercialization of that research to benefit the economy. And certainly there's \$600 billion in dead money that we need to pull back into the economy. So there are big problems.

This bill is essentially an exercise in redundancy. It's seeking to solve a problem that doesn't exist. So one has to wonder why it has actually come to the floor here at Queen's Park.

Let me just focus on the redundancy piece. The Financial Accountability Office can already look at proposals made by legislators. They have a broad, overarching responsibility around economic modelling and looking at the finances of the province, but they also serve the legislators. We built that into the legislation so that it wasn't like the budget officer at the federal level, who served at the discretion of one individual. The Financial Accountability Officer is accountable to us, and in doing so is therefore accountable to the people of this province.

So it's curious for me to see—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Didn't they vote against that?

Ms. Catherine Fife: No. They spoke against it, but they supported it. How could you possibly not support such a good idea? It's a progressive idea that seeks to interrupt a fairly scandalous record of government. Certainly, we're looking to address some of those issues, because they are systemic. We didn't want to bring something to this House that is just a one-off. We needed to get to the very heart of the matter, which is the way that funding is spent and the way funding decisions and policy decisions are made in this House. Certainly, those are long-standing issues over the course of the Liberal government.

Aside from this legislation trying to solve a problem that doesn't exist, it does sort of touch on alternative service delivery, which would be a reasonable request the member could make of the Financial Accountability Office, which then leads to the question, why is this bill even necessary? Why use this opportunity to bring this bill to the floor?

Because I don't have a good answer to that question from the PCs—I certainly didn't hear it from the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore—I have to assume they're introducing this bill for the same reason they seem to do anything in this place: playing political games and shouting from the sidelines. This bill is fixing something that isn't broken. It reminds me of what the PC government did with our electricity system in the 1990s. We can still see that playing out in the province of Ontario on everyone's hydro bill.

Aside from this bill being redundant—as I've already said, the Financial Accountability Office can already look at proposals made by legislators. The Financial Accountability Officer can already look at the state of the province's finances, including the budget and trends in the provincial and national economies, at her or his discretion, whomever we decide to hire—it's almost done, though, and I've made the point that it has taken a long time for us to get through that process.

What this bill does change is nothing. The powers the original legislation gives to the Financial Accountability Officer already allow him or her to perform the tasks set out in this bill that we are debating. With that said, it's confusing that this bill was even introduced, and it is even more confusing because the Conservative caucus, when we were originally debating the Financial Accountability Office, criticized the creation of a new bureaucracy. This office was designed to prevent the kind of

scandals they shout about every day in this House. They said at the time that it was just a waste of money.

But now they introduce a bill that would actually add to the bureaucracy by giving the Financial Accountability Office powers that it already has. It really is like a strange sort of Seinfeld episode; it's the bill about nothing. But really, it does tell a story. It tells a story about gamesmanship, and these aren't even entertaining games. This is not like the Game of Thrones, which has some value—some violence.

The people of the province do not benefit from MPPs bringing pieces of legislation like this to the floor. They have no patience for it, and who could blame them? For the last two and a half years, instead of addressing all the problems I outlined prior, like the lack of child care, the energy issue, the economy issue—there's so much work that can be done—the PC caucus has let the clock run down and done next to nothing. There have been some PMB motions that have come forth that we've actually supported, but the two significant opportunities that the PC caucus has had to positively impact the people of this province, through the last two budget sessions, they have let go by. They've been calling for an election since the day they lost the last election.

1500

It's a wasted opportunity, and it's frustrating. What we hear from the people of this province is that they want their politicians to work harder. They want us to work more. They want us to work more collaboratively. While there are some people on both sides of the House who are uncomfortable with a minority government, there are many people in the broader public who are happy that it's harder for us to get the work done, but they like seeing us get results, like increased funding for home care, like a youth employment strategy and like the Financial Accountability Officer. There is a serious, serious trust issue—a disengagement, also, from the people of this province—with this place.

You must wonder why a private member's bill like this, which seeks to impact the discretion, which Kevin Page, the federal budgetary officer, said he needed—of course, we saw great interference by the Prime Minister with that budget officer. Independence is key.

Here you have a private member's bill that's already seeking to change the expectations of the Financial Accountability Officer before we even have him, when it's already in there. It is so important for each one of us to understand that the people of this province want the Financial Accountability Officer to be effective. They understand, more so than some people in this House, that we need that oversight, that we need that second look at policies.

Imagine what we could have done. Imagine if, prior to selling the 407, we could have sent that information to the Financial Accountability Officer, and he or she would have indicated how much it will cost us down the line. That would have been forward-thinking. It would have, hopefully, impacted the decisions that we made around this.

In conclusion, I would just like to go back to the redundancy theme because this private member's bill is not needed. It is not in the interest of the people of this province. One wonders why it's even here on the floor of the Legislature.

I think that we have come to this place with a completely different and respectful understanding that, in this minority setting, negotiating the Financial Accountability Office in the last budget round is in the best interest of the people of this province. It's in our collective and shared interest that that office is successful, without interference, and it should operate as an independent office. Of course, we will not be supporting this.

We would rather be talking about creating good jobs, strengthening health care and addressing environmental issues. You know what? We will make a commitment to read the budget, because that's why people sent us here. We're going to read a budget before we say how we're going to vote on it, and I would highly recommend that the PC Party does the same.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I am pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 160, An Act to amend the Financial Accountability Officer Act, 2013 with respect to reports concerning alternative service delivery of public services. Of course, this is a private member's bill introduced by my friend and colleague the PC critic for government accountability and MPP for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Mr. Doug Holyday.

It's an area that MPP Holyday brings a lot of experience and a lot of knowledge to. From his former roles as mayor of Etobicoke and deputy mayor of the city of Toronto, MPP Holyday is bringing his experience forward with this important bill, and he is to be commended for such an important piece of legislation which will help government identify ways to save money.

Speaker, given the current state of our economy in this province, and as current agreements and contracts begin to expire, government unions should be forced to compete with the private sector to provide government services. We can no longer simply turn over a blank cheque, regardless of service, regardless of cost. One only needs to look as far as the maintenance contract at the Toronto District School Board, where taxpayers paid over \$143 to install a \$20 pencil sharpener. It's examples like this, cases like this, where Ontario taxpayers are getting the short end of the stick, that MPP Holyday's bill will help prevent.

MPP Holyday's bill does not extend to core government services like policing, regulated health professionals and teachers, but there are many areas—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I interrupt the member? I'd ask you to use ridings, rather than names.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's areas like these, such as facilities management, IT services, food services and administrative work, that we can look at being provided by an alternative service.

When we implement open and fair competition to the public sector, it does not matter whether government employees or those working in the private sector earn the contract. The goal is obtaining the best value when using taxpayers' money and the best possible services. Taxpayers win, and that's really what this bill is all about: who can do the best job at the best price for Ontario taxpayers.

I'm proud of my colleague for bringing this bill forward, and I would encourage all members in this House to support MPP Doug Holyday's bill this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Once again, I warn the member: We use ridings and not names. Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I will take a couple of minutes to speak to my friend's bill, the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore. I listened to my friend, who was elected at the same time as me. We're both former city councillors. He talked about a garbage strike in his community. It lasted about a month, back in the 1980s. I went through a 101-day garbage strike not that many years ago as a city councillor, and at the end of the day we contracted out garbage collection in Windsor. But no jobs were lost. No jobs were lost. I want to point that out.

I think it's a good example to set the tone for the debate, except being new here in the Legislature, I'm not exactly sure how many refuse collectors—sanitation engineers—we have on the provincial payroll. I'm not sure how many we have that get paid by the province of Ontario to do the work that's been cited in the example. It's like the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex talking about pencil sharpeners in schools. I don't believe that in the province of Ontario people that replace—I don't know, do we have any pencil sharpeners in the House? I don't know. If we do, I doubt very much the example that was used would amount to the same cost analysis.

If we want to put the Financial Accountability Officer to work and give him make-work projects, I would like to see him do a cost-benefit analysis of the Conservative million jobs plan. Will they really create a million jobs? Where would the jobs come from? What would the people be paid? Would there be jobs with benefits? What would be the cost along the way? Would there be job losses because of other policies, such as their automotive policy, with no input whatsoever?

So I appreciate the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore. I consider him a friend, but I will not be supporting his bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: This is my second opportunity this afternoon to stand and talk about financial, fiscal-related matters in this House. I actually want to begin by congratulating the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore to an extent for bringing forward this particular item today. I did listen very closely to his remarks, because I do have respect. I have respect, not only for the member who

sponsored this particular item today, but I have respect for all other 106 members in this chamber who come from different walks of life, who bring their own unique circumstances, their own unique experiences to bear with respect to the ideas, the debate, the dialogue, the legislation, the motions or whatever it is they happened to be speaking about on a given day. In particular, the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore does—as we all know in this House—have a fair degree of experience with respect to what's taken place in other places at other times at other levels of government. So I did want to listen closely.

1510

I do have a certain degree of respect for the fact that—I want to take this one at face value. There's a lot of stuff that comes from the official opposition caucus that you can't always take necessarily at face value, because there may be some other motivation, and that may be the case here, but given that this is one of the first opportunities that I've had to hear the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore speak at length about a matter, I do want to give him the benefit of the doubt.

But I think, regardless of what I've just said, it's important to make sure that, as the member from Kitchener-Waterloo has said in her remarks, this is an idea, this is a bill—a private member's bill—that doesn't need to be supported, fundamentally because of its redundancy. We all know—and I know this has been discussed in the debate so far this afternoon—how the Financial Accountability Officer role came to be. It was a fairly crucial, a fairly fundamental part of Ontario budget 2013, something that I know Premier Kathleen Wynne and, of course, the finance minister and others on this side are very proud about.

As I said I at debate back months ago when we were discussing the creation of the FAO, the creation of this office, the undertaking on the part of our government to make this happen, is something that is, in fact, consistent with a number of steps that we have taken as a government since 2003 to make sure that the people of Ontario have that sense, that comfort level, of knowing that fiscal transparency and accountability are top of mind for those of us on this side of the House, and that has been the case since 2003.

Earlier, the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and myself were chatting about this very fact, this very piece of information. If you take a look at the track record over the last just about 10 years or so, you'll see that there have been a number of steps taken by this government to make sure that we bring that level of awareness, that level of transparency, to the discussions that are taking place, to the activities of government, starting with one of our very first moves in our very first budget back in 2004, when we created legislation to make sure that no future government of Ontario could ever do what had taken place in the last budget that was tabled in this House before the 2003 election campaign. That's the measure that makes it a requirement that the books of the province are reviewed by the Auditor General before an election campaign so that people can

have a clearer sense, regardless of whether the government is of this party or another party, Speaker—that no future government can, perhaps, attempt to confuse voters by alleging that the books are one way when, as we learned in 2003, they were in fact a completely different way, when there was a \$6-billion hidden deficit left over by the previous Conservative government.

We've heard from the discussion so far in the House today that—and I mentioned this a second ago. When the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and the member from Windsor–Tecumseh spoke, they talked about the fact that this is a bill that goes over territory, covers territory, that is already covered because of the creation of the Financial Accountability Officer. Speaking for myself—and I think this has already been discussed in this House during question period at one point weeks ago, so I think it's fair for me to say, safe for me to say—I actually, in my capacity as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, have the privilege of working with a member of the Conservative caucus and a member of the NDP caucus on the hiring process around this Financial Accountability Officer role. It's been a tremendous experience so far. It's been great to work with other members of this House. There's been a lot of constructive discussion, both at those meetings and also in this place about what this role will look like and what the powers will be and the extent to which the inaugural—the first—Financial Accountability Officer here in the province—when he or she takes on that role, what their responsibilities will be.

Fundamental to the position, as we discussed when we brought forward this motion or this idea, this concept in budget 2013, the notion that it's really important. It's really important. This is a position that enhances openness, transparency and independent analysis.

I know I'm echoing, to an extent, some of the remarks that were brought forward in debate by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, and deservedly so. She was right in what she said earlier today in this House about whether or not this particular measure, this legislation that's being brought forward by the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, is in fact necessary. It's my position, and I believe the position of most on this side of the House, if not all, that it is redundant. It's not necessary, because we have created, through budget 2013 and through subsequent legislation, this position of the Financial Accountability Officer, which will have all of the tools and have all of the power vested in him or her to make sure that the job gets done properly, to make sure that some of the concerns the member who has sponsored this particular bill—and again, I'm going to accept that it came from the best of intentions, or it has the best of intentions. That role, those responsibilities, all of those things that he seeks to see accomplished with this amendment are, in fact, already taken care of, because they're fundamental to the original bill that created this particular position.

I think it's also important to note, as we have talked about previously in debate, just so everyone is quite aware of this fact, to reinforce it—I am very proud to be

part of a government, very proud to be part of a Legislature that has moved forward successfully with the creation of the Financial Accountability Officer as a position. As we will all know, we are, here in Ontario, the first province here in this country to introduce this legislation and to create this exact position. This is a position that will provide independent analysis to all members of provincial Parliament. This is an individual who will have the opportunity and the responsibility for examining the state of the province's finances, including the Ontario budget, as well as trends in the provincial and national economies. This one is really important, I know, for every member of this House. This individual, the Financial Accountability Officer, will have the power, at the request of a legislative committee or an MPP—an MPP from any one of the three caucuses in this chamber—to provide other types of research, including the financial cost or benefit to the province of any public bill.

The list goes on, in terms of the responsibilities and the powers that are vested as a result of the legislation around the Financial Accountability Officer. It's a long list of responsibilities, opportunities, whatever the case may be, for this new position. That is perhaps the strongest reason as to why we've heard from members of the NDP caucus and you're hearing from me now on this matter that the bill is not necessary.

The bill is not necessary because the original intention that drove the creation of the Financial Accountability Officer was to vest in one individual, along with whatever kind of office and resources they may require to do the job that they're empowered to do—vested in that person are all of the responsibilities and, within the realm of the job description, all of the opportunities for that individual to do what the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore is seeking to accomplish with this particular private member's bill. So that's why, as both the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and the member from Kitchener–Waterloo have said, I think it's important to say that the bill does not need to go forward here at second reading. It doesn't need to go to a legislative committee because we've already, in fact, accomplished that.

There was some other stuff that came up in debate a little bit earlier. I don't have much time on the clock. I'm relatively new in this chamber as well, having been elected in September of 2012, just about a year before the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. But I'm also a person who has studied fairly closely—in fact, I worked here in the Legislature for my predecessor, the former member from Vaughan, so I had been around the building many years ago. In fact, I'm a bit of a student, I suppose, of Ontario politics and history. I think it is important to remember that, as we go forward—and now here we are in the month of March—the Ministry of Finance and the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs are rolling up our sleeves collectively to do pre-budget consultations. I think one of the things that was mentioned by the member—I believe from Kitchener–Waterloo—is, it's important for the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore and all members of the

official opposition caucus to take into account, as we continue to work with very extensive consultations with people from right across the province of Ontario, doing our very best to inform Ontario budget 2014—to make sure that it continues to be a responsive document, to make sure that it's a plan to keep moving the Ontario economy forward. I would actually say to my friends, to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, to his leader, the leader of the official opposition, and to every member from the Ontario PC caucus who serves here in this place representing their communities, that, unlike the process leading up to budget 2013 and unlike the process leading up to budget 2012, the members of the official opposition do the right thing this time around—hopefully, third time is the charm, as they say—and that they actually keep an open mind; that they continue to work with all other members in this House; that, for the first time in at least a couple of years, they wait to see what Ontario budget 2014 will look like, what it will contain—

Ms. Soo Wong: And read it, too.

1520

Mr. Steven Del Duca:—that they actually take the opportunity to read that budget; that they successfully fulfill the role that normally falls to Her Majesty's official opposition; that they play a constructive role; and that they work with us, unlike what took place, as I said, back in 2013 and unlike what took place back in 2012, and that they don't rush to judgment.

There's an opportunity, there's plenty of discussion in the run-up to the budget, and there's plenty of discussion after a budget might be introduced in this House, for them to engage with residents in their respective communities and come back to this place. Perhaps, Speaker—perhaps—if they actually, for the first time in recent memory, take on a more constructive role with respect to the budget process, they will be spared what's taking place here today, where one of the members of their caucus, perhaps with the very best of intentions, has brought forward a proposed private member's bill that's redundant. Perhaps, if they play a constructive role here in budget 2014 and the process leading up to it, we won't land in a place, long after budget 2014 has been introduced and passed, where members from that caucus are introducing measures that aren't necessary.

With that, Speaker, I just remind everyone here that I plan to vote against this measure, primarily because I don't believe that it's necessary, and it's redundant.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 160, the Financial Accountability Act, or what I've liked to call the respect for taxpayers act. Look, the government shouldn't be in the business of flipping hamburgers and cleaning out garbage bins. At a time when every dollar spent must be accounted for, we cannot continue with gold-plated contracts for routine services at the expense of hard-working taxpayers. It's the government's responsibility to provide the highest-quality public service for the taxpayers at the best possible price.

Unfortunately, though, this is not the case for facilities management, IT services, administrative work or food services. Something needs to change, and Bill 160, the Financial Accountability Act, will provide that required change. This important piece of legislation will allow for better, more cost-effective management of public service delivery. It will do that by allowing the government to tender contracts to private sector companies which would compete with government unions that currently provide routine public services. In turn, this competition would spur innovation and efficiency within government.

We're already seeing the benefits of this policy in countries like Great Britain, in American states like New Jersey, Florida and Indiana, and in cities like Chicago, Indianapolis and Phoenix. In fact, the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore implemented this policy right here in Toronto, in Etobicoke. As a result, he saved the taxpayers money: in Toronto, \$11 million annually in residential waste pickup, \$4 million in cleaning up parks and public buildings, and another \$2 million in Etobicoke for contracting out basic services when he was mayor. You know what? Satisfaction among residents for those services has actually gone up.

I encourage members to rethink their position, possibly, here and vote in favour of this bill, because it is not a partisan issue. It's about proper management, something I think the party opposite has a difficult time doing these days, proper management of government services for the people of Ontario, the ones we are sent here to represent and respect.

There was a report released by Deloitte that found that the savings could be between 10% and 30% by opening up competition in the bidding process. Savings like these would have a ripple effect throughout the province. If we award a contract to a facilities management company that is more cost-efficient and provides greater service, we can have cleaner hospitals, classrooms and public buildings.

Speaker, I'll tell you, before I was elected to this Legislature, I worked for a company called Honeywell Building Solutions, and we did just that: operating facilities throughout the province. I look at Woodstock Hospital, for instance, where Honeywell maintains and operates a facility for 25 years under the public-private partnership that they have. Honeywell is held to standards, targets. They are held accountable on measures that would ensure performance. This ultimately will save taxpayers—providing good services for a good price, respecting taxpayers.

That money that they've saved can be focused on hiring more nurses and doctors in our hospitals, more teachers in our schools, more social services throughout our province. Eleven million dollars in the city of Toronto alone: One can only imagine the social services the city can now provide simply because they've opted to go this route.

The Fiscal Accountability Act is also a job creation plan. In fact, it would encourage private sector businesses to bid on public service delivery contracts within their

own towns and cities. As more companies win contracts for public services, they'll be able to hire more people in their communities. This will allow for new businesses to get a foothold in the marketplace. It will create more growth in local economies, and it will provide more opportunities for entrepreneurs across this province.

Speaker, as you can see, Bill 160, the Financial Accountability Act, respects taxpayers' money by providing the highest-quality service at the best possible price for routine public services.

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to this important piece of legislation. Again, I'd like to thank the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore for bringing this bill forward, not only in terms of what we need in the province of Ontario but with a true track record within the city of Toronto, showing that it can happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It is an honour to rise today and speak to the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore's Financial Accountability Act.

Bill 160 would simply ask the incoming budget watchdog to review government services and make recommendations on how we can maintain quality of service while saving money. Health care professionals, teachers and police officers would be exempt.

This is a simple, well-thought-out bill from a man who has had experience in saving the public's money. My colleague was able to save his constituents money as mayor of Etobicoke when he opened up garbage collection to competition. The new garbage collector required half as many employees as the previous arrangement and offered improved service.

We're talking about allowing people to bid on contracts for things like laundry and some IT services. Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan already do this. It's something that economist Don Drummond has actually recommended.

When my constituents make a purchase, they shop around. They weigh all their options and make an informed decision based on their budget and what they need. The people of Chatham-Kent-Essex know the value of a dollar. They do not understand, nor appreciate, the fact that this Liberal government is outraged over the fact that we, the PC caucus, try harder to save money that doesn't belong to them in the first place. This money belongs to the taxpayers.

We need to send a clear message to our constituents that we are looking to maximize the value of their dollars. At the end of the day, this is their money that we're dealing with. I know that may come as a surprise to the Liberals, and perhaps even the NDP—or should I say the spend-DP? My constituents want good services at a good price. It's our duty to do everything we can to ensure that we're spending money wisely.

I take great pride in stating that my PC caucus are, in fact, the wallet watchers of Ontario. Actually, by opening up contracts to friendly competition, we open up the door

to Ontario businesses and unions that do not have exclusive deals with the province. Under the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals, it's the well-connected who seem to get all the opportunities, and we see it time and time again. Look at the Liberals' deal with Cisco, a company that earned \$2 billion in profits in a single quarter last year. The Liberals are handing them \$190 million to create up to 1,700 jobs. That's a cost of about \$112,000 per job, by the way. Any government that thinks this is prudent job policy is out of their mind. Further, this will do absolutely nothing to help out the areas of the province that need the jobs the most.

Economist Mike Moffatt stated that Premier Wynne's "awful" jobs plan "won't create a single job." All this will do is raise the wages for highly skilled workers who already enjoy a large salary in a sector that has a very low unemployment rate. The province is taking public dollars out of the hands of the ridings that are bleeding jobs and handing them over to a company making billions in profit in an industry that does not need a handout.

1530

What the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore's bill will do is end the monopoly that the well-connected friends of the Liberal Party have been able to enjoy for over a decade. By opening up government contracts to different unions, contractors or companies, we will ensure that the taxpayers get good value for their dollar.

Speaker, this is common-sense legislation that our province desperately needs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: I thank everyone who participated in the debate, but I must tell you that I've heard the same arguments before over the years. There's a few more that go along with it, but by and large, people have told us, "It's not broken; you don't need to fix it." "Nothing is to be gained by this." "You could already do this without making any changes." But it has turned out that that wasn't the case.

In the city of Toronto, for instance, it took 12 years to make the change, and that 12 years, I estimate, cost \$400 million. That's good tax dollars, money that people worked hard for. They gave it to us to manage and run their affairs, and we might as well have put it, as I've said before, in a big dump truck and taken it down and thrown it in the lake, because it didn't provide any better service than we could have got if we had saved the \$400 million. But people weren't of a political mind to want to stand up and do what was right. So it's time now that we do stand up and do what is right.

It's not just me saying this, by the way. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce have written a paper on this, and they advocate this policy. They recently released their report Public Sector Problems, Private Sector Solutions that identifies a number of opportunities for alternative service delivery. That's the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

The Drummond report itself also suggests that we should move to private sector delivery wherever we can. Recommendation 3-5 states, "Do not hang on to public assets or public service delivery when better options exist." Well, Mr. Drummond speaks common sense. It's just advice to us. We're just citizens like everyone else. We come here without a great expertise in any field, normally. We're charged with the responsibility of looking after the best interests of our citizens, and we get this good advice and we don't want to take it. I'm urging you today to take that advice. Do what's right for the taxpayers. Forget your political philosophy and just do what's right for the taxpayers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

The member for Nipissing on a point of order.

VISITORS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to stand and introduce Hannah Bywater, a friend of mine from the city of North Bay. Hannah was just awarded an Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year Award by our Lieutenant Governor. She is here with her younger sister, Sophie, her mother, Jen Bywater, her father, Brent Bywater, and her very wonderful grandparents, Anne and Fred McNutt. Ladies and gentlemen.

TORONTO RANKED BALLOT ELECTIONS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR UN MODE DE SCRUTIN PRÉFÉRENTIEL POUR TORONTO

Ms. Hunter moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 166, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006 to allow the City of Toronto to pass a ranked ballot by-law for city council elections / Projet de loi 166, Loi visant à modifier la Loi de 2006 sur la cité de Toronto afin de permettre à la cité de Toronto d'adopter un règlement municipal sur le scrutin préférentiel pour les élections au conseil municipal.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation. The member from Scarborough-Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I'm honoured to stand here today to debate the first bill that I have introduced in this House.

Bill 166, titled the Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act, 2014, would allow the city of Toronto to pass a bylaw allowing for the adoption of a ranked ballot voting system for the election of members of city council and the mayor, following extensive public consultations with residents of the city of Toronto.

On January 24, 2012, Councillor Paul Ainslie, a city councillor who represents the majority of my riding of

Scarborough-Guildwood, moved a motion to bring ranked balloting to municipal elections in the city of Toronto.

On April 24, 2013, a report was released by city staff which included a detailed review of ranked ballots and acknowledged that the province would have to pass an amendment to authorize the use of ranked ballots for the city of Toronto.

On May 13, 2013, the motion was debated within council through the Government Management Committee. Citizens and councillors were able to debate the bill and ask questions.

Toronto city council debated the motion and voted in favour of adopting a ranked ballot system on June 11, 2013. This motion passed 26 to 15 votes.

The motion clearly states that city council requests the Ontario government to amend the Municipal Elections Act to authorize and establish the framework of ranked choice voting to permit Toronto city council to use ranked ballots and instant runoff voting in municipal elections.

This is not only something the city of Toronto needs but it is also specifically requested by the city council. The passage of this bill is a simple measure that we can take, not only to improve local democracy, but also to foster a better working relationship with this province's largest municipality.

This issue has been championed by Dave Meslin and the Ranked Ballot Initiative of Toronto, who have joined us here today. I see them filling in the public galleries and the members' galleries. I really appreciate their attendance here today. Thank you to all of the volunteers, the thousands of you, who have supported and sustained this bill over the years. And thank you, Dave, for your leadership on this issue.

I would also like to thank my staff, who have worked tirelessly on this bill: Jessica Behnke, my legislative intern; Damien O'Brien, my executive assistant; and Dayani Ravichadran, my special assistant.

Finally, this bill is one that is important to me personally. It hails back to the time that I was co-chair of the Emerging Leaders Network. In 2009, we held a studio event, gathering our rising leaders in this city to talk about what initiatives and projects matter to them. This summit gave rise to many of the projects that are being spearheaded by the ELN today. One of our projects was Better Ballots, which sought to improve voter turnout and reflect Toronto's diversity through our voting system.

I attended a town hall meeting, one of four which was held in Toronto that year, at the Scarborough Civic Centre in April 2010. Following the four consultations, it was agreed that ranked balloting, or instant runoff voting, was the best choice to meet the needs of Toronto's vibrant, diverse and growing population.

Many critics argue that a proportional election system would be preferred to a ranked ballot and more conducive to fairly representing Toronto council; however, city officials have asked us to provide the ability to do a

ranked ballot system. I do believe that a ranked ballot would be the best effective system for electing our mayor and our city councillors.

Cities that have already adopted a ranked ballot system include San Francisco, Minneapolis, Berkeley, the state of North Carolina, and London, England.

Furthermore, all Canadian political parties and all political parties in Ontario have adopted runoff voting to improve democracy.

By introducing Bill 166, I am seeking to strengthen our local democracy here in the city of Toronto. Speaker, Toronto is a diverse city, and that should be reflected in the way that we elect officials who represent us at city hall. Under the current system, vote splitting along ideological lines is far too prevalent. The implementation of a ranked ballot system would completely eliminate vote splitting and allow voters to rank all candidates who fall within their ideological beliefs, rather than choosing one over the other. Candidates who ideologically align would also not be forced to drop off the ballot in order to avoid vote splitting, again giving Torontonians more choice in whom we choose to represent us in council.

1540

With a ranked ballot, there would be no wasted votes. Under the system that is currently being used, voters choose one candidate, and if that candidate does not win, then their voice is unheard. Under a ranked ballot system, voters will be able to rank their choices. Once the first choices are counted up, if a candidate has 50% plus 1 of the vote, they will be declared the winner. However, if no one has achieved 50% plus 1, the candidate with the least amount of votes drops off the ballot. The voters who had their candidate ranked first will have their vote transferred to their second choice on their ballots during the second round of voting. This would continue, in instant runoff fashion, until a candidate receives 50% plus 1 of the vote.

The current system of first-past-the-post also encourages negative campaigning. I believe that the tone of our elections here in Toronto needs to change. Negative campaigning is an aspect of politics that has reduced election cycles to personal attacks on someone's character rather than the merits or shortfalls of a candidate. It has also taken away from informed, positive discussion of the issues at hand.

Under a ranked ballot system, opposing candidates can always hope for a second- or third-place ranking, and that would force them to have to appeal to a larger base of supporters through their election campaign. It would be ill-advised for candidates who have aligned ideologically to attack each other and risk alienating voters. The tone of our local elections here in Toronto would significantly improve.

Importantly, a ranked ballot system encourages more people to seek elected office. Women, younger voters, visible minorities, people who make up a huge part of this city, yet are under-represented at city council, would be empowered to run for elected office. This would provide voters with more options when going to the polls on election day.

Voters would no longer be required to compromise their personal preferences to select a candidate they don't entirely support. As Dave Meslin would say, you would be able to vote with your heart. In the same vein, candidates with low support would not be forced to drop off the ballot early, and potential candidates would not be discouraged from running based on polling numbers early in the race.

It has not been very long since I introduced this bill, and yet I have seen overwhelming support from my constituents in Scarborough-Guildwood. I have been approached by residents in the riding, and my constituency office has received countless calls and emails of support for Bill 166. This past week, I was at the opening of a restaurant called the Spice Shack in my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood. One of the organizers of the event was a University of Toronto Scarborough campus student, and she was so excited about this bill, because it was discussed as part of her class.

Should this bill pass, it would be a welcome change. It would not take effect until the 2018 municipal election cycle. This would allow ample time for public consultations—a key component of this bill—an education campaign and a second vote by Toronto city council to move the vote through a bylaw. This is a bill that, if passed, will allow the city of Toronto to adopt measures that will improve local democracy for millions of residents in this city while giving Toronto city council something they clearly have prioritized and asked for.

A ranked ballot election system would eliminate vote splitting and prevent candidates from dropping off the ballot due to poor polling numbers or to promote strategic voting. A ranked ballot would deter negative campaigning, fostering a more positive tone for elections in Toronto. Finally, a ranked ballot election system would encourage more people to run, giving the people of Toronto more choice when it comes to electing their city officials.

This bill is something the city of Toronto needs; it is what they have asked for. I hope I can count on all members of this House to support this bill so that it becomes law.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to rise today and add my voice on Bill 166, the Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act.

I believe, as I always have from my earliest days, in the importance of defending democracy, defending the power of the people to directly elect their leaders and to understand that every vote counts. I think that those of us who have engaged in the public electoral process often meet people who say, "My vote doesn't count. I'm only one." I think that history certainly demonstrates that one vote does matter, and it matters as much today as it did then.

But I have some concerns about what we are discussing today, because one of the things that certainly comes to mind with this is that if a ranked ballot system was to

be used, it also adds another layer of complexity here. This means if I vote for candidate A as my first choice and B as my second choice, and someone else votes C for their first choice and B for their second choice, then B ends up as the winner, although neither of us chose candidate B as our first choice. The problem here is that this bill would allow an election that declares a winner of someone who actually didn't win by the numbers. This is the candidate who was not elected as the first choice by most people.

I think that one of the issues related to this—as I said, “one person, one vote” has been the goal and the cornerstone of our democratic process, and it has certainly been something that, for many generations in the evolution of our parliamentary system, was held out. If you go back and you look in time, in the 19th century you had to meet requirements of a financial level, or you had to own land or you had to be male. When we get into the 20th century, it's citizenship and obviously not a question of women unable to vote.

That then becomes something that, around the world, frankly, people are dying to have. I think that we need to understand that, first of all, as Winston Churchill said, nothing's perfect. No government is a perfect system, but this one works. Any night you want to turn on the TV, you can see in many areas of the world that this is something that people want to have. They're fearful to go to vote, or they're simply unable. There's violence preventing them from doing this.

One person, one vote, I think, is something to be treasured and respected. But it's not just that. It carries with it the fundamental strength of the democratic system, which is choice and civic responsibility. It implies an equality; it implies a sense of power that we all have.

It's a complex thing that reduces the value of the ballot, to rejig the outcome. In fact, it creates a barrier between the voter and his choice.

What I think we need to keep in mind is that elections are not a feel-good exercise. There is no prize for second or third. This is a harsh reality that winners and losers must continue to learn. The winner must work with his or her previous opponents and try to represent their concerns and, in turn, the loser must work with the winner toward broader goals. We don't need to have a handicap in the race.

1550

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm really happy for the chance to speak today to Bill 166, the Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act. I want to thank the member from Scarborough—Guildwood for bringing this bill forward. The bill we're debating here today, as you know, is a response to a request that was made by the majority of Toronto city councillors, who asked for the legislative tools from the province to allow them to move forward to explore alternative voting options; specifically, this issue of ranked ballot voting.

I also want to thank people who have come into the galleries today for being here. It might not seem like it's

very full, but there are in fact more people here today than there usually are in the galleries, and I think that's a good thing. By a show of hands—of course, through the Speaker—I'd like to know how many people are here for the first time today. That's awesome. That's fantastic. Again, through the Speaker, I would like to welcome you and thank you for being here today. I think that's great.

As we know, proponents of electoral reform have identified that there are real problems in our city and in politics in our city, and they suggest that a ranked ballot voting system could change how we elect our representatives and begin to transform the political culture in Toronto, which I believe is important. Proponents say that ranked choice runoff ballots could help eliminate vote splitting and reduce strategic voting. It would ensure majority support for winning candidates, it would discourage negative campaigning and it would provide more choices for voters. All of these are important objectives, and they're goals I agree with, because it's clear to me that we see increased cynicism about politics, not just in Toronto but in Ontario and right across the country, and that's something we need to address.

I think people are cynical for a good reason. I think people see that the system is not working very well for them. They see scandal after scandal. They see too many politicians who put their own interests first. They see a system that's broken, that's been underfunded, that's been privatized and that continues to put profit before people. They see a system that delivers only for the most privileged. It delivers for those who are well connected. Well-connected insiders come first, while too many people are left outside in the cold. People feel too often that politics happens to them. It happens somewhere else—somebody else is involved—but it doesn't happen with you, and that's a problem.

But I think there are hopeful signs. I know that down the street at Toronto city hall, many people—some of the same people who are here today in the gallery—have been working to change the political culture in our city. I know that municipal politics often feel closer to the ground and closer to the people, and I know from experience that Toronto city council—Toronto city hall—does feel more open and more accessible to people. Too often this place, which was named for the Queen, feels more like a castle. We forget that this is our building. It belongs to the people of this province. It's intimidating to enter—you might have found that when you came here today—and it's difficult to participate here. You probably noticed that you weren't allowed to bring your telephone in and you're not even allowed to write notes here in the gallery. I think all of that is problematic.

But it's different at Toronto city hall. People are more engaged, I believe, and they are connecting with their politicians in different ways. They've asked them to examine new ways to run elections in Toronto. That's why in June 2013, a majority of city councillors voted to ask the province for the tools to reform their electoral system. That motion was supported by city councillors from right across the political spectrum. It was supported

by New Democrats like Mike Layton and Gord Perks, in the west end of Toronto; by Davenport Liberals like Anna Baillao and Cesar Palacio; by Conservatives like Karen Stintz and Gary Crawford. People from across the spectrum supported this motion, and I hope that all parties here today and all members will also support the bill that's been raised today.

I've heard from many residents in my community, my riding of Davenport, people who have been inspired by the RaBIT campaign and who have asked for change and who want change. That's why, on February 25, I introduced a private member's bill that would allow Toronto to proceed with electoral reform.

Applause.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you. It's why I'm happy to stand here today on behalf of residents of my riding of Davenport to support Bill 166, because residents of Toronto have the right to have this discussion, to have this debate and to make a decision; because we need people in this city to know that their voice matters. We need people in this city and across Ontario to remember that politics matter, that they deserve real choices, that they deserve to have their voice and their vote count, and that they deserve to have a politics that really does put people first.

I believe that we can have a positive politics in this city and right across the province of Ontario. I believe that we can have political representatives who strive to represent the complexities of the communities that they serve; and that we can have a political system where politicians earn their mandate and are supported by a majority of the electorate. We can do better, and I believe we deserve the chance to do better. That's why I'll be supporting Bill 166 today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me start off by congratulating the member from Scarborough–Guildwood for an excellent presentation on something that I feel very strongly about. I've been in favour of some form of proportional representation for the last 30 or 40 years and was very actively involved in the 2007 effort to actually make it happen.

Mr. Michael Prue: What about Kawartha Lakes?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Give me a chance, okay? Give me a chance.

What I can't understand—I'm a very practical individual. I've been involved in and out of politics for the last 40 years. What I can't understand is that if we basically use that system within each and every one of our political parties to come up with our leaders—we have a ranked ballot system, basically—why can't we do it for the general public? If there are two things that I don't like about this bill, it's that (1), you didn't talk about all of Ontario; and (2), you're not implementing it this year, quite frankly.

It's as simple as that. Who is against this notion? Incumbents. What do you like as an incumbent? To have as many folks run against you as possible, because the

incumbent is usually better known and, therefore, usually ends up winning. Well, that's not very democratic. I can remember that when I was first appointed as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—and certainly the member from East York will remember it well—there was the newly amalgamated city of Kawartha Lakes. I'm not going to talk about the de-amalgamation issue. What I'm going to talk about is this: It is my understanding that there were seven very good people in that community who wanted to be mayor—seven very good people. I'm not here to attack anybody. One was in favour of the amalgamation; six were against the amalgamation. Who got elected, with about 20% of the vote? The person who was in favour of the amalgamation.

All I'm saying by that—and they're all good people; I'm not here to attack anybody personally. But the reality is that no one should hold office with the potential of having only about 20% or 25% of the people supporting them. I think that this is a very reasonable way, a very straightforward way in which we can at least be assured—whether we're talking about our local communities, whether we're talking about provincial representation or federal representation—that the person we send to any of these places has the majority support in that community. It may not be the first support that they give to somebody, but at least, at the end of the day, that person will have the support, at some level, of 50% or more of the people.

I think this is a very good way of doing it. I think, for many of the reasons that the member has mentioned as well, that it will cause much less—particularly with people who are ideologically aligned—controversy or attacks between one another. I think it is high time that we brought our system, the democratic system that we're all so proud of, into the 21st century. This kind of initiative should not only be adopted locally here in Toronto and throughout Ontario but also at the provincial and federal level. The sooner it happens, the better the kind of discussions that we're going to have on an ongoing basis in places like this, which, quite frankly, on most days, is lacking. I think we can all agree with that.

I'll tell you, I've been a municipal politician, and the kind of debates that we had municipally, at most times, were at a much higher level than anything I've heard here or, indeed, in the Parliament in Ottawa as well. So let's support this bill, and let's make it happen as soon as possible, hopefully even this year.

1600

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I first want to congratulate the member from Scarborough–Guildwood and certainly the people in the gallery who are interested in this issue. It's an interesting debate this afternoon, and I would say that it is important. Democracy is sacred, actually. In the very limited time I have, I want to provide a little optional view of the world.

The history is that in 2007 there was a referendum on this issue. It was defeated. In fact, the city of Toronto

voted against it. It has recently had a review, the referendum, if you may recall. Maybe you weren't aware of it, but those are the facts. It's important that it has been discussed a number of times.

I will say this, too: The member from Scarborough—Guildwood was recently in a by-election. Now, in that by-election, if you know how this ranked-order ballot works—she only won by a few votes. Our member, I think, was Ken Kirupa. If there was a ranked-order ballot, and there were three candidates, and the third person dropped off, and their votes were for our member, that member would have won.

Hon. John Gerretsen: No, she would have won.

Mr. John O'Toole: No. Actually, if you look at the numbers, the same thing—the Attorney General just said here that he supports this thing. Well, Kathleen Wynne was not elected to be Premier by the people of Ontario. In fact, she was not elected by the people of Ontario. This is the unusual and arcane thing that happens in a democracy.

I think there are a couple of other members who should be able to look at the history here. I know the leader of the Green Party, Mike Schreiner, is here, or was here. These people want a voice, and they should be able to work within the system today. I'm not confident that this government listens.

Now, it doesn't matter who gets there, but Premier Wynne thinks—between her and the NDP right now, we have a coalition government in Ontario. They don't have a majority; they have a minority.

Mr. Jonah Schein: John, speak to the bill.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's very relevant, Mr. Schein. It's very relevant to this, because when you look at trying to change the rules, you're ignoring the history of the debate. There have been several large discussions and referendums on it across Canada, and they simply don't get it. I understand that the minority parties want to change the rules because they never form government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I had the opportunity several years ago to travel with other members of this Legislature across Canada and, indeed, into Europe to look at the mixed member proportional system and how to bring proportional representation to Ontario. We looked at many ballot systems, including the ranked-ballot system. In its wisdom, the community and groups of Ontarians who got together to look at it rejected this system in favour of something that is used in New Zealand and Germany called mixed member proportional.

But I am still mindful of the ranked-ballot system and where it's in place, in places like Australia. To me, it is not the perfect system. But I want to tell everybody here, if you're worried at this point, that I am going to vote for this. I am going to vote for this because it is a better system than what we have today. Is it the best system? No. But it is a better system. It's a better system because it can be modified to work for the city of Toronto and, indeed, almost every single municipality across this province.

When I looked at the member from Scarborough's bill, Bill 166, I also looked at Bill 163, from my colleague Jonah Schein. I liked his bill a little bit better, not just because he's a New Democrat but because it allowed other options for the city of Toronto to explore. I'm hoping that this bill will allow those same other options.

It is important that this bill pass here today. It is important that this bill be sent to committee. It is important that certain amendments be made. Most importantly, it has to go on to the city of Toronto for a real discussion, not only amongst the council but possibly including a referendum of the people. This needs to be seized upon. People have to agree to do it, and I'm hopeful that one day they will.

One of the reasons I support this bill is because, with just a little tinkering, it can change very rapidly from a system of ranked ballot to one of multiple member constituency with a ranked ballot. That is the system that they use in Ireland. It means that you have four or five or six positions within a larger constituency. When you do the ranked ballot, you actually get proportional representation. That is what we need to look for because when you get proportional representation, like in Ireland, it gives opportunities to people of colour, women and others who are not ordinarily elected to find themselves on the top of the ballot. The ranked ballot does not always succeed in that. Look at Australia for that.

But I'm hopeful, always, that we can take a system that is being proposed, we can modify it, we can improve it, and people of good conscience can make it work.

The ranked ballot initiative is a good one. It will, in the end, result in fairer elections, less confrontation, a potential council that works together, and a mayor and council which we all share. Everyone in this room, including some of my Tory friends, need to support this initiative for the sake of democracy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: This is another great opportunity for me to stand in my place here in this chamber this afternoon to speak regarding the item that's been brought forward by my colleague the member from Scarborough—Guildwood. I'm very happy to have this opportunity, as I always am, to stand and speak about a matter that's being deliberated on by those of us who are privileged to serve in this House.

In the time I have, I want to spend just a moment, Speaker, if I could, talking about the individual who has brought this bill forward, because this initiative, this bill speaks to the level of leadership that she has brought to this chamber and to the governing caucus since first being elected just last August, I believe it was, August 2013, and the work that she's undertaken. You see evidence of that—we all see evidence of that—in this particular piece of legislation that's being introduced in the House today that speaks to the history that she's had working very hard both in the community of Scarborough—Guildwood but also across the broader community of the GTA and beyond to demonstrate leadership

and to demonstrate how important it is for all of us to be involved in our communities, to better our communities and to find creative and innovative ways to make those improvements that will have lasting impacts.

Many of the other speakers who've come before me today, Speaker, including the Attorney General and the member from Beaches–East York, have spoken very eloquently about the need for moving forward with this. Of course, I also strongly support passage of this particular bill here at second reading. It's important for it to get to committee. It's important for the members of the committee to which, hopefully, it will be referred to have a chance to take a look at the bill, to examine and analyze the implications of the bill. It's important as well to send a message to those who are not only here today in the galleries but also watching at home to understand that we are a government that has a history of working hard to empower municipalities to make the choices that make the most sense for them.

I know this is an issue, as the Attorney General mentioned, that from time to time elicits a wide variety of reaction in some people who are nervous about changes, especially fundamental changes, to a system, but I think we see very clear evidence that the time has come for this Legislature to empower the province's largest municipality to give the people who are represented at that council the opportunity to take a look at this.

The member from Beaches–East York did reference that perhaps this is also the kind of measure that would require—not require, but perhaps this is the kind of measure that could also be put to the people directly by way of a referendum. I think there is a wide variety, a whole host of potential roots for this particular measure, this concept or idea to take upon receiving support here at second reading and upon going to committee, being considered by committee and reporting out of committee.

It's really important that everybody, even those who have concerns, including the member from the Conservative caucus who spoke just a second ago who has concerns—I think it's important for all of us to keep an open mind. This is about forward progression. It's about an evolution. It's about improving and enhancing our democracy in the way in which we elect people, and as the member from Scarborough–Guildwood mentioned, it's also about doing what we can to take some of that inadvertent tension in the system sometimes—it's an adversarial system. There's no doubt about that. I enjoy the partisanship just as much as the next person, sometimes perhaps more than the average person, but from time to time, when we're dealing with such important matters as electing our leaders municipally and beyond, we have to do what we can to make sure the system is as strong, as fair and as effective as it can possibly be.

With that, I will say once again how proud I am to serve alongside the member from Scarborough–Guildwood. She is already working very, very hard to leave a lasting and positive impact on this place. I want to echo the comments of the Attorney General and some of the other members who have spoken: I encourage all members of this House to join with us to support this

measure, to get it through second reading, to get it to committee and to empower the city of Toronto to make a decision.

1610

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I rise to speak on Bill 166, introduced by the member from Scarborough–Guildwood. While the member may have good intentions to introduce such measures, I have concerns with the proposed legislation to give the city of Toronto the option of adopting a ranked ballot system to conduct its municipal elections as early as 2018.

In my riding of Thornhill, the city of Vaughan portion elects three regional councillors based on the top vote-getters, while the city of Markham side elects four regional members, also on a city-wide vote.

Last night, actually, I spent some time discussing this with my 21-year-old son, Josh. He actually made a chart for me that I'm happy to share with people—I can email it to you—that in this ranked ballot system, the more candidates that we have in the pool, the less fair it becomes. His chart actually shows that a candidate—if there are eight candidates, for example, which is what he did—we had eight candidates and I think about 15 voters—the candidate that got the most first votes and the most second did not win. That's a problem for me, and I think that that's not what people expect to see happen when they go and vote on election day.

How does this improve democracy? I'm using the candidate from Scarborough–Guildwood's own words that this would improve democracy. After all, we have a Premier right now who was not elected by the people of Ontario. She was elected at a Liberal Party convention at a time when, like now, the Liberal Party was in a minority government position. To me, that's a democratic problem.

The voters understand the first-past-the-post system. If they understand the system, they're more likely to go out on election day and actually vote. They vote for the candidate of their choice, and they want to see that candidate elected in what they perceive as a fair system. The candidate who wins the most votes should be elected to that position, just as I was on February 13 last month.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I will be supporting Bill 166. I want to congratulate the activists from the Ranked Ballot Initiative, many of whom are here, and the supporters who took the time to come and listen to the debate. As my friend from Davenport said, it doesn't happen all too often that we get so many people in the Legislature, so it's a very good thing.

The member from Scarborough–Guildwood made some good arguments, obviously, and there's no point in repeating them. My friend from Davenport introduced a bill and made very strong arguments that I strongly support, so I won't be repeating the arguments, other than to say that I support their views.

I want to make reference to the columnist from the Toronto Star, Regg Cohn, who talked about, "Ad-

mittedly, it's never easy to achieve democratic reforms." Then he argues, "People don't like change."

He's right. People do not like change in general, and it's difficult to achieve it. I recall, when we have the debate around mixed member proportional a couple of elections ago, that New Democrats were strongly supportive. I was looking forward to the Premier, who said that we put it out for the vote in the debate, and he didn't comment on it once. I don't remember too many Liberals talking about it either; God bless. The Tories, of course, were clearly opposed. But New Democrats supported a change of a system that said that people have a right to be able to vote for who they want and know that their vote will not be wasted. That was the point of the mixed member proportional system. I still support it very strongly.

At the municipal level, we don't have a party system, so you couldn't, in my view, have a mixed member proportional system because it doesn't work as well, except to say that the member from Beaches—East York pointed out how the system could work and how you could make it better. The point of his remarks is that we have a number of different views, and that's good. Debate is very good. We need to allow the city to have the debate and the province here, when we have hearings. We should never be afraid of the debate. That's why it's a good thing that this is before us.

I will be supporting the bill, clearly, when it's sent to hearings, so we can hear from any of the people who are here and others who have views about how we improve our electoral system.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: First, I want to join in thanking my friend and former CEO of a not-for-profit in this field, CivicAction. We missed each other when I was the president of the Canadian Urban Institute. Thank you for this. It's nice to see that, when people come here with clear eyes on the democratic experience, they don't lose that. This is a really important piece of legislation.

I'm sure my friend Dave Meslin is somewhere in the House. I was searching for him and couldn't find him.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: He's here. He's downstairs. He's watching.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: He's watching. Okay. Dave, I want to thank you. I've often said that the civility of our society is dependent on the quality of our citizenship. There are very few people that can actually claim title to the word "citizen" like my friend Dave Meslin, because he's someone who gets up every day, with many of the other folks who are here who I am enormously indebted to, and actually thinks about the conditions of the people in their neighbourhood and their lives, the quality of their democracy. They look at how they can make a difference. They live not in the middle of their own lives but in the middle of other people's lives and try to see the world through different perspectives, to live outside their comfort zone and to live with people who may have different perspectives. God knows, in our houses of democracy, we could use a lot more of that.

This is an interesting piece of legislation. When I first ran for city council, I got 36% of the vote. My other two opponents got 28% and 27%. It was kind of touchy in the 1980s in the prairies to run as an openly gay man, so I've always been curious: If we had had ranked ballots, what would have happened? So in supporting this, there's not much self-interest. By the time I got elected as a councillor, and they had two or three years of me, they kind of liked me, because I got 83% of the vote. That was pretty intimidating to anyone who was going to run against me. I don't think, after I was an incumbent, I ever got less than 80% of the vote. I wouldn't run against someone who was getting 80% of the vote, so it's not a very democratic process, and this is the best and fairest reform I've seen.

I'm very proud that I represent, I think, one of the three constituencies that nearly got us mixed proportional representation here, which I still believe in. I'd also like us to do more things here—

Mr. Michael Prue: Mine, too.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Mine, too.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yeah, Parkdale and—the waterfront family here, we saw the light where others didn't. But I believe that that reform, had it passed, would have made this a healthier and more democratic place. I'm hoping this is the start of more things.

When I ran for mayor of Winnipeg, a city of 700,000 people, I could only spend \$150,000. The other great egregious offence to our democracy is the lack of spending control, which would eviscerate this if we didn't have very significant spending caps. We have five former mayors over here, recovering mayors: Mayor Gerretsen of Kingston, former Mayor Chiarelli of Ottawa, Mayor Crack of North Glengarry, myself and my friend Ted McMeekin, the former mayor of Waterdown. We will tell you that we lived in simpler times with spending caps, and none of us needed the kind of money to do that. I think that's the other piece, that this is important.

I have to just deal with the Conservatives. I'm disappointed that there isn't more support over there. It does not surprise me. This is the party that downloaded health, social services and highways on to municipalities. That is the party that forced amalgamation. My city is an enormous city of 2.7 million people—unwillingly forced upon it by the party opposite when it was in power. They stripped our school boards of local democracy, and our school trustees have no authority. So it does not surprise me that the skunk at the garden party again is the party opposite.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, I want to utilize the one minute—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

1620

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Well, you know, this is an interesting afternoon. We've got a province that's \$280

billion in debt. They've got an annual deficit of almost \$11 billion, and here they are discussing changing the voting system of the city of Toronto, and the other matter they wanted to bring forward is to try to pry some more money out of the federal government.

What is wrong with you people? Why aren't we dealing with the big problems that we have, that are going to help improve the quality of life for the people who live in the province of Ontario? That's the motion that I put forward, and I have a feeling that people here could care less. If we're going to care about some things, let's get important things on the table. This is not one of them.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Further debate? Further debate? Last call for further debate.

The member for Scarborough–Guildwood, you have two minutes.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I believe I have one minute on my original—

Interjection: Two

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Two?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not allowed.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: All right. I want to thank all the members who have spoken to this bill. I want to say that this is about local democracy, and we see that in action in this room today, in this chamber today, with all of the people who have come forward who have worked for years on this motion at city council and now this bill that is before you today. I want to thank them for their leadership and for their engagement on this issue.

I understand, Speaker, that over 8,000 people have already signed an online petition in support of Bill 166, and there is more to come.

I want to thank the member from York–Simcoe, who talked about choice and civic responsibility, because that's what this bill is all about; the member from Davenport—I really appreciate your support for this bill, and I know that you have also been engaging on this issue as well with your community; the member from Kingston—I have so much respect for the AG and for the experience and the history that he brings and really looking at how we can broaden this for all of Ontario; the member from Durham, who really—you talked about the discussion and the consultation and that is embedded in this bill; the member from Beaches–East York, who talked about fairer elections and the importance of democracy, and I think that's what we're aiming for here today; the member from Thornhill—you are a new member and we welcome your ideas; the member from Trinity–Spadina, supporting democratic reform and how difficult change is, and that's why we're elected by the people, to really lead that change; the member from Toronto Centre, I want to thank you for your ongoing support and for your leadership.

Today is Toronto's 180th birthday and I think this would be a great bill to support.

As always, my colleague and seatmate, the member from Vaughan, thank you for your support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

FEDERAL TRANSFER PAYMENTS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 76, standing in the name of Mr. Dickson.

Mr. Dickson has moved private members' notice of motion 62.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. We'll take the vote at the end of the next two.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Holyday moved second reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend the Financial Accountability Officer Act, 2013 with respect to reports concerning alternative service delivery of public services.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a bunch of noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Tough call. We'll take the vote at the end.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I need a noise meter in here.

TORONTO RANKED BALLOT ELECTIONS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR UN MODE DE SCRUTIN PRÉFÉRENTIEL POUR TORONTO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Hunter has moved second reading of Bill 166, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006 to allow the City of Toronto to pass a ranked ballot by-law for city council elections. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):

Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to—the member from Scarborough—Guildwood?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: The committee on social policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to social policy. Agreed? Agreed.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1626 to 1631.

FEDERAL TRANSFER PAYMENTS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Dickson has moved private members' notice of motion number 62. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic

Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Gerretsen, John
Hatfield, Percy
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael

Marchese, Rosario
McMeekin, Ted
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Schein, Jonah
Singh, Jagmeet
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please stand and remain standing.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Holyday, Douglas C.

Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Marlow, Gila
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 42; the nays are 21.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Open the doors. Let the members in.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY
ACT, 2014LOI DE 2014 SUR
LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Holyday has moved second reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend the Financial Accountability Officer Act, 2013 with respect to reports concerning alternative service delivery of public services.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Holyday, Douglas C.

Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Marlow, Gila
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic

Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Gerretsen, John
Hatfield, Percy
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael

Marchese, Rosario
McMeekin, Ted
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Schein, Jonah
Singh, Jagmeet
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 21; the nays are 42.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading neglected.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION ACT, 2014LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PROTECTION
DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION
AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 18, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / Projet de loi 83, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll just wait 30 seconds to let the room clear.

The member for Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to stand in this place today and to speak on Bill 83, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expressions on matters of public interest. Basic-

ally, what we're talking about here is SLAPP suits. That's a strategic lawsuit against public participation.

This isn't a new issue. In fact, our leader, Andrea Horwath, brought this issue to the forefront in 2008 when she introduced the Protection of Public Participation Act to encourage more participation in public debate without fear of legal repercussions. Although there was a Liberal majority at that time—and right now they seem very in a hurry to pass this—that bill didn't pass.

Despite what the Liberals are saying, the government has only allowed five days of debate since June 2013. For the people at home, the government controls the agenda. It's not the other side; it's the government that controls the agenda. If they wanted to push a bill through—certainly a bill like this—they could do a better job than what they're doing now. They're basically out of control of their own agenda.

I specifically want to speak to this bill, because in my riding, many of my residents and myself personally have had experience with SLAPP suits. I'd like to recount one experience that many members in my riding have had and that I was also involved in. If you want a detailed description of what happened with the Adams mine in our riding, you should read the book that won the Speaker's Book Award last night, *Unlikely Radicals*, by Charlie Angus. It will tell you the whole 15-, 20-year story of Adams mine, but I'm going to do a short version of what happened with the SLAPP suit.

1640

Adams mine was destined to be a garbage dump for the city of Toronto. It went through the environmental assessment, a scoping environmental assessment, and it was given a licence by the Ministry of the Environment.

I was president of the Timiskaming Federation of Agriculture. We had been involved for years with this project, starting when I was on the public liaison committee struck by the city of Toronto, Metro Toronto, and I represented agriculture. I had been involved with this project for years.

After the project had gotten its licence, new information became available to us that cast some doubt on whether the conditions under which that licence was granted were actually accurate.

We wrote a letter to the Ministry of the Environment, alerting them to those conditions. We were rebuffed. At that point, the federation of agriculture, with myself as president, held a press conference in the media studio here. It was organized by my colleague from Timmins—James Bay, who, at that time, wasn't my colleague but he was a friend of mine. At that time, we alerted the government—at that time, it was Premier Eves—that we had discovered new information and that we were going to ask that the licence be retracted, at which time the proponents of the project launched legal action against me personally and against the federation of agriculture.

Under this legislation, the way I see it, that legal action would have come quickly to a judge, and because the site was licensed, I think the judge would have said—and I'm not going to presuppose a judge, but I think the

judge would have said, "This legal action should be able to go ahead," because we didn't have the proof yet; we'd made an allegation, and the company sued us. I think it should have gone ahead, which it did. We were sued for \$10 million. I was sued personally, and if my friends and neighbours hadn't come forward to help me plant my crops and pay for my inputs, I would have gone bankrupt.

A little while later, we came forward with the report by Dr. Ken Howard, who is now head of geology for the University of Toronto. He's one of the most respected hydrogeologists in this country. He came forward with a report saying that he couldn't prove that our allegations were correct, but that neither could the MOE; they should not have approved the site based on the information in front of them.

At that point, there was an election, and the McGuinty Liberal government was elected. All of a sudden, we went from being rebuffed by the MOE to the MOE calling the federation of agriculture, asking what our opinion was. It was totally different.

Right after the government was elected, the Adams Mine Lake Act was proclaimed, saying that, basically, no garbage could ever be put in Adams mine.

So everyone was happy, except the federation of agriculture and myself, as president. I spoke against it when the committee came. I forget what hotel it was, but the committee came, and I was one of few people who spoke against the Adams Mine Lake Act, not because I wanted Adams mine to be a dump but because they'd never come to find out why it was approved in the first place.

At that point, the lawsuit against me continued. The Adams Mine Lake Act proclaimed that it was never going to be a garbage dump, but the lawsuit against me, that stopped me from getting bank loans, that basically was crushing my business, continued and there was no way for me to get that lawsuit out from over top of my business, Speaker.

If this bill had been there then, at that point, I could have applied, as president of the federation, and said, "Okay, wait a second. At this point, this legal action has no validity. I am not harming their business, because they don't have a business." At that point, this bill could have kicked in and could have saved me two or three years of grief.

Interestingly enough, the only way I got out of this lawsuit is that I had to run for provincial Parliament in 2007, and a week before the writ was dropped, the lawsuit was dropped, because I would have been able to go out all over the country. Oh fine, the Liberals stopped the Adams mine, but they didn't stop people from being sued. They just walked away and let myself and members of the federation of agriculture—they just let us be broken.

Under the Adams Mine Lake Act, all the investors were fully paid, and I don't have a problem with that. They got a licence, and their licence was taken away. They were fully paid. But there was nothing in the Adams Mine Lake Act to stop that legal action that was crushing the federation of agriculture members. As far as

I know, until this act was brought forward, there was nothing to change that. So on behalf of people like us who had to fight issues like this—and it has happened later in my riding with two other issues—this is a good start.

I've been contacted specifically by the forestry sector, and I think they have legitimate concerns. They're worried that they will be attacked and have no recourse. But I truly believe, like I said at the start, that when we first made that allegation and didn't have the proof, that legal action should have continued.

In our party, we don't believe that Bill 83 should render people—that they can say whatever they want and be free from harm. That's certainly not our view of what anti-SLAPP legislation should be. Anti-SLAPP should protect the public if they believe they are making valid concerns, and if those valid concerns can't be substantiated, then the litigation could continue. But if those valid concerns can be substantiated, it should be brought to a court much quicker. What happens, really, with these lawsuits is that they sue you for incredible amounts of money and grind it out in court, because they know that the legal costs will force you to throw up your hands whether you're right or whether you're not.

I was very fortunate that in my community, the businesses and the farms, went door to door and collected thousands and thousands of dollars to pay our legal bills, because they believed. But if it hadn't been for that, there's a good chance that the new information would never have been brought to light. That's something we have to keep in mind.

This legislation is very important. It should be brought forward. It might have to be amended to make it stronger in certain areas and to protect all parties, because you know what? Corporations aren't evil. Everyone has a different—but corporations aren't evil. Some of the things they do aren't always welcome. But this bill should go forward to committee, and we should go from there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, it is very interesting to listen to the member opposite about his own personal experiences in this regard, and I guess he has underscored the reason for having this kind of legislation more so than any other.

I've heard from a lot of individuals on both sides of the issue over the last two to three months. Just today, I received a letter from the Ontario Bar Association. They speak on behalf of 15,000 practising lawyers who are members of the Ontario Bar Association. They say, categorically, "I respectfully urge you at this time to allow the bill to proceed to committee for further review." They want this bill.

Speaker, I've heard from people on the other side as well. I've made it quite clear to them that what's intended with the bill is quite simply this: If someone feels that an action has been brought against them just for making a public expression on an issue of public interest, then they

can apply to a judge who will make a determination within 60 days, by reviewing the case, as to whether or not it is brought for that purpose and that purpose alone. If a judge is convinced that it's not just brought for the purpose of making a public expression, then he will allow the case to go on.

There has been an awful lot of misunderstanding about the purpose of the bill. The purpose of the bill is quite simply that within a very short period of time an adjudication can be made as to whether or not the person is being sued just for having the right to express their opinion in public about a particular issue.

1650

Once again, I urge everyone here—the Conservatives are in favour of the bill, too; at least they were the last time they spoke about it—to let the bill go to committee. We've had five or six days of debate on it now. Surely to goodness, on a bill that we can all agree on, if we want to move it forward, let's take it to committee so that they can further study the matter and make the necessary amendments to make the bill even stronger. I think all of us can agree on that. Let us make it happen here today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I thank the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane. It sounded very much like the circumstance today, and I've made a point with the Minister of the Environment—we had a meeting in the press gallery representing my constituents, who are opposed to a mega transformer station being built on the Oak Ridges moraine, which constitutes a risk to the environment. It's on top of the Oak Ridges moraine. It's five large transformers, each about 400,000 pounds, 45 feet high and right on top of the Oak Ridges moraine—five of them. They had a video of a recent transformer explosion.

These young people—they're not connected to me except they happen to be my constituents—came to me, and I've written to the Minister of the Environment and the Environmental Commissioner and all that stuff. I put on the record that Hydro One just bullied them; they had the public meeting and all that stuff, but they're just going ahead with it. They called it a minor project; it's the largest one in Canada. Hydro One has a presumptive attitude that they're going to score the puck and ignore us. These people got the brush-off.

They went to a professor, Professor John Cherry from Guelph university, the same as the NDP member from Timiskaming—Cochrane who just spoke, and that expert—they paid him; nothing to do with me. I did ask the minister for funding for them, but they never got it. He said—this is Professor John Cherry from Guelph university—that insufficient study had been done to protect the aquifer. They're going ahead with it. The minister, in the silence of Christmas and New Year's and people not paying attention, approved it.

All they were asking for was a full environmental assessment, a bump up to part II. The minister, I put on the record today, ignored them. He gave them the brush-off. They had a press thing today and I am fortunate that

our environmental critic showed up, and a few other people.

I'm saying here, without any bias at all, that this is another example of a process, in this case the government with its bully pulpit, using the SLAPP method to put voices down.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to congratulate the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane for his personal story. It was very, very convincing and courageous. It speaks to what citizens do when they believe strongly in something and it speaks to the incredibly, powerful interest groups that will prevent any member, any citizen from disagreeing with them. And it's a good story to be told over and over again. There are powerful interest groups in this society that are generally connected to the Conservative Party and often connected to the Liberal Party as well. God bless.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know that the Tories are for the little guy. I know that. It's beautiful to listen to you guys. Every day these days I hear an agenda of the Conservative Party in defence of the little guy—beautiful—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the member to speak to the bill.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —while all along you are the party of the powerful interest groups.

I think this bill is a good thing that we should be passing right away. It reflects the concerns raised by our leader in 2008 when she introduced the Protection of Public Participation Act to encourage more participation in public debate without fear of legal repercussion, and so it's moving in that direction many, many years later.

I remind the government that you control the agenda. If you want this bill to pass, make it so. Make it happen. Don't blame the other political parties for not advancing an agenda or passing a bill that you put forward. You control the agenda. Move it along, without saying it's the other folks who are stalling this. It's you that are stalling it. Move it along.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I think we've heard from all three parties this afternoon on Bill 83. I agree with the previous speaker that this is something that should move along. If we were able to have a vote and move it along right now, that certainly would suit this side of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, you have two minutes.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to be able to stand here and respond to the Attorney General, the member from Durham, the member from Trinity-Spadina and the member from Oakville.

As I was sitting here listening to the responses, I think this is the first time it hit me: that we have an incredible

privilege standing in this House, because we can say things without fear of recrimination. We can say things that we believe and that can be proved without recrimination, but without this bill, that's not possible for the people outside these walls. That's one of the reasons that this bill should proceed to committee and should be further discussed, because I know that, as we speak, there are cases where people's lives are being destroyed for doing what they believe is the right thing.

In echo of the Attorney General, this bill hopefully, if it goes through committee, when it goes, shouldn't be designed to quash legal action. This bill should be designed to bring a case forward much more quickly so it can be decided whether the case should proceed, because that's what SLAPP suits are designed to do: They're designed to get a case into the court and grind it through the courts forever, and you cannot afford the legal costs to protect yourself.

When it happened to me, I was given 30 days to recant, and then they would drop the suit, and when I didn't recant, they sued me personally for \$10 million. I don't have \$10 million; I still don't have \$10 million. But you have to be able to defend yourself, so please pass this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I am very pleased to rise in this House this afternoon, Thursday afternoon at about 5 o'clock, to speak to second reading of Bill 83, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest, standing in the name of the Attorney General. I want to compliment him for being present in the House this afternoon to hear the debate, to listen to the members of the opposition, as well as the government members, offer their opinions. In fact, he and I arrived at Queen's Park at the same time this morning. It was good to see him walking over to the Legislature—no entourage; no car and driver; just walking over like a regular person. To see the Attorney General coming to Queen's Park like that—I was really impressed.

I must say to the Attorney General that it has been a pleasure to work with him over the last number of years. I guess he was first elected in 1995, if I'm not mistaken.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Yes, that's right.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Yes. He has been here for a long time and he has made a significant contribution. I know that he has expressed to his constituents his desire to move on to another phase of his life, but he has served here with distinction, and he deserves enormous credit for that.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you; thank you. Let the bill pass.

Mr. Ted Arnott: However, Bill 83: a different matter.

I know that our caucus has participated in this debate, and we have a number of members who wish to continue debating this bill over the course of second reading, and that's our right, of course. We have an obligation to bring

forward our views and the views of our constituents, and in opposition, of course, to a large degree, expressing the concerns that we do here about government legislation. But, at the same time, I think there's some level of agreement that what the government is doing is indeed responding to a serious problem.

Our caucus has said that we believe that the rights of individuals to express their opinions must be upheld, especially on matters of public interest, and we've said that we agree that SLAPPs, as they are known—SLAPPs being strategic lawsuits against public participation—while they are relatively rare, when they do occur, they can, in fact, ruin people's lives. We understand that, and we do not think it's appropriate for residents to fear having a voice in the growth of their communities—to have that voice silenced.

We also believe that SLAPPs are, by definition, unfounded and stand little chance for succeeding, so they can needlessly bog down Ontario's court system. As such, we see Bill 83, on the surface at least, appearing to be an effort on the part of the government to address the issue. However, as the Attorney General has pointed out, there will be opportunity for further discussion when this bill, most likely, goes to a standing committee of the Legislature. I would hope that, over the course of that process, there are extensive public hearings, assuming that there are groups and individuals that want to come forward and express their views. Those views might be supportive of the bill; they might be against the bill. Some of the expressions of interest might offer suggestions for improvements to strengthen the bill and make it more effective, make it work better. We recognize that that process is important, and we would obviously participate in it.

1700

I also think it's important to put on the record what this bill is intended to do, our understanding of it, and I would welcome a response from the government. As I understand it, Bill 83 amends the Courts of Justice Act to create a process to determine if a lawsuit is in fact a SLAPP, a strategic lawsuit against public participation, and if so, to dismiss it accordingly. We know that a SLAPP is a lawsuit that is pursued for the sole purpose of silencing or punishing those with an opposing viewpoint. This effect is also sometimes referred to as "litigation chill." Part of what defines a SLAPP is the fact that it is a meritless case, and it's intended more to intimidate or punish the defendant rather than to truly seek justice for a wrong suffered by a plaintiff. Typically, SLAPPs are withdrawn shortly before they go to trial; however, by this time, they have served their intended purpose by those who bring the lawsuit in that they force the defendant to go through an extended period of concern and duress and often at great cost financially to defend themselves in the courts.

Bill 83, as we are told, establishes a new legal procedure that can be used if someone is sued for voicing their opinion on matters of public interest. If enacted, Bill 83 would allow the defendant in this situation to move a

motion that would allow them the chance to prove to a judge that the legal proceeding brought against them arises from a communication they made regarding the public interest. If the judge was satisfied that this is the case, the legal proceeding would be dismissed, as it would in effect be determined to be a SLAPP. However, if the judge was not satisfied, the legal proceeding would proceed. The judge would also be able to reward compensation regarding costs on the motion if they deemed it was appropriate. If the judge dismisses the legal proceeding due to the motion and finds that the suing party brought the proceeding in bad faith, the judge may award the defendant damages as the judge considers appropriate.

If the suing party has proceedings before a tribunal, the defendant who has moved a motion under Bill 83 may also supply a copy of the motion that was filed with the court to the tribunal, and the tribunal proceeding shall be stayed until the motion is dealt with in court. Bill 83 also places, as the Attorney General said, a 60-day timeline on the hearing of the motion so that the matter would be dealt with in a timely manner. This is a key factor in eliminating SLAPPs' negative effect on the court system, and it's also important for countering the effect of potentially having tribunal proceedings stayed while the motion is before the courts.

We're told that the bill also amends the Libel and Slander Act to establish that the current privileges regarding oral or written communications possessed by individuals who have a direct interest in a matter of public interest are also extended to media representations or communications of said individuals' oral or written communication. Basically, right now, if someone has a direct interest in a matter of public interest, they can discuss it and be fairly protected from legal action. However, if a reporter or someone else were to write about what that person said or publish it, then they would be susceptible to legal action, because they could be seen as not having a direct interest in the matter. Bill 83 extends protections to include individuals and reporters recounting or repeating any discussions on the matter. The bill also amends the Statutory Powers Procedure Act to provide that submissions for costs shall be made in writing.

We also know, and I think the Attorney General pointed this out when he led off the debate at second reading, that this bill is a reaction and a response on the part of the government to the report from 2010, now four years ago, to the Attorney General, or, I guess, his predecessor, from the Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel. This panel was chaired by Dean Mayo Moran of the faculty of law, University of Toronto, and was composed of Peter Downard, who is, I understand, a partner at Fasken Martineau's law firm, and Brian MacLeod Rogers, who is a Toronto media lawyer.

The panel was established by the Attorney General to seek advice on how the Ontario justice system could be revised to prevent the misuse of the courts and other agencies by SLAPP cases while at the same time preserving the appropriate recourse for those who are caused harm by the expressions of another.

Bill 83 is based on a substantial number of the recommendations of the 2010 report, I understand. The only aspect of the report that was apparently not included in the bill is a section of the report which recommends automatic cost awards and payments upon resolution of a motion under the bill. Ministry officials apparently stated to our caucus during a technical briefing that stakeholders were hesitant to include this section, as it tampered with already-established costing and payment methods within the legal system.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that SLAPPs are relatively rare. They are not something that is common in the justice system, as far as we know, but there have been a number of very high-profile SLAPP cases that have garnered significant media attention. Three of those examples, I'm told, are the Big Bay Point development; the Aurora mayor apparently suing opponents three weeks before election day; and the East Gwillimbury mayor suing critics. The Big Bay Point case, in particular, was cited as a driving force behind the anti-SLAPP efforts.

In summary, this bill, the government tells us, is intended to combat SLAPPs in Ontario. It establishes a formal legal process for assessing suits to determine if they are SLAPPs and for disposing with them if so.

Bill 83, if enacted, the government tells us, would help better define what SLAPPs are by building judicial precedent via the new legal process. The bill would also assist minimally with court backlogs, as it would ensure that meritless SLAPP cases are not using scarce court resources, and these cases would be dismissed.

That concludes the time that I have, but I certainly look forward to this debate as members continue to put their comments on the record, and we look forward to seeing this bill in committee and hearing from the public to ensure that Bill 83 is strengthened.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Mr. Speaker, in the interests of moving this forward, I'm going to just let this pass for now. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It was a pleasure to hear from the member for Wellington-Halton Hills.

We've had over eight hours of debate now in this Legislature over this bill, Bill 83. It's time to send it to committee, where the real work is done, where we can hear from deputants, do clause-by-clause amendments, if there are any, and then bring it back here for discussion again. I just want to emphasize that it's time to get this bill moving forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I do appreciate the comments and the civility of the member from Waterloo-Wellington. There is great respect whenever he stands in the House to bring some sensible comments with respect to a bill.

Now, this bill is important. It represents the rights of people to have a dissenting voice—not frivolous and

vexatious voices, but voices that have some substantive concerns. I think that's our position.

What we are concerned about is that we have very little trust, unfortunately, in the Wynne government. We could not get any of the information on the Ornge helicopters or the gas plant cancellations. They are not very transparent, so I think I have cautious notes on this. This government has been a bully. That's really my experience, and I hate to say it: first-hand experience—

Interjections.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Did he say that the government's been a bully—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I can't hear you.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for your point of order. I would ask the member to carry on, but please, let's have some civility in the House. I would rather you not attack your friends in the House.

1710

Mr. John O'Toole: But it clearly demonstrates how the little person is actually manipulated, in this case, by the Attorney General, perhaps the most powerful civil servant—

Hon. John Gerretsen: I've been called a lot of things in my life, but never a bully.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw that term. Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Carry on.

Mr. John O'Toole: But in this case here, there is a clear demonstration of the small person's voice being subordinated to the stronger figure. That's what this SLAPP designation is about, a strategic lawsuit against public participation. In the tone of it all, I fully support the sentiment of it; it's the abuse of it that I'm most concerned about.

To put on the record today, I had the Enniskillen Environmental Association pleading with the Minister of the Environment to listen to their concerns—their scientific concerns—and their worry about the contamination of water on the Oak Ridges moraine as a result of a government project, and the minister will not listen to them. I'm asking him to listen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Frank Klees: I am pleased to follow the member from Durham. What we just saw here in the Legislature, as he pointed out, is a perfect example of a powerful authority figure quashing legitimate debate. Here, the member only had one minute to respond, and the Attorney General, one of the most powerful people in the

province of Ontario, stood up on a point of order so that he would shut down the member from Durham and didn't even allow him to make the point that he did. How can we trust this government to live up to the spirit of the law that is before us?

That's why we have some questions about it, and come the committee hearings, we will be challenging the Attorney General. This moment that he gave us in this House is a perfect example of how the overwhelming authority of this government, and a person, the Attorney General, a powerful figure, would take on a backbencher, someone as humble a servant as John O'Toole, who stands up for his people every chance he gets. I would just ask the Attorney General to stand in his place, do the right thing and apologize to the member.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order, the member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No. Are we done?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Wellington–Halton Hills, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to express my appreciation to the member for Scarborough–South West, the member for Durham and the member for Newmarket–Aurora, who theoretically responded to my speech. Then, unfortunately, it went a little sideways and there were responses to the responses.

But the fact is, again, this is an important piece of legislation, and I think it's also important to point out again that the opposition reserves the right—it's a parliamentary responsibility we have and, I would say, a constitutional responsibility—to thoroughly debate legislation. I know it sometimes frustrates the government that we're standing here—perhaps that we're even in here—debating legislation, bringing forward the views of our constituents and our own views as to what ought to be done. We would like to see this bill go to committee, too, but at the same time, I think we have an obligation to thoroughly debate the legislation at second reading, and then, when the bill comes back, presumably to continue the debate at third reading just to make sure we get it right. I think that's most important and something that all of us as members, especially those who have served on both sides of the House—some of us have had the privilege to serve in opposition, as well as government.

I know the Attorney General was in opposition for a number of years. He was one of the most passionate debaters in opposition, and he participated fully. In many cases, the government was compelled to bring in time allocation because the Liberal Party—some of the Liberal members maybe don't know this because they didn't have the opportunity to serve in opposition—was very, very forceful in opposition in bringing forward their views and making sure that the views of people who, quite frankly, had concerns about some of the government legislation that was being brought forward at that time, were heard in this Legislature. Certainly, they made use of the committees, as well, to discuss bills thoroughly. I wouldn't question their right to do it, nor their sincere interest in improving legislation.

That's why we thoroughly debate legislation here, Mr. Speaker, including Bill 83, and I look forward to continued debate and hearing from my colleagues as this debate continues this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm going to keep my remarks short. I won't be using my full time, because I really encourage that we send this bill to committee.

But I'm happy to rise and just say a few words on behalf of my constituents in Davenport, and as the environment critic for the Ontario NDP, to speak to Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act.

The NDP has advocated for anti-SLAPP legislation for many, many years. It was way back in 2008 that our leader, Andrea Horwath, first introduced an anti-SLAPP bill—it was also called the Protection of Public Participation Act, but that was back, as I said, in 2008—that would have protected participation in public debate without fear of legal repercussion.

It's unfortunate that the government didn't move to support our anti-SLAPP bill back then, and it's a shame that it has taken this government so long to move this piece of important legislation forward.

Bill 83 is a bill, clearly, that we support, and it's an important bill. The people of this province have waited long enough for this type of legislation to be passed. The protection of individual free speech should be a priority for this government. It should be a priority for every government that claims to be democratic.

People in Ontario have a right to weigh in on environmental issues that matter to them. They have a right to report environmental violations; to file complaints with government agencies; to contact the media; and to speak at public meetings without fear. They should have the right to engage in public campaigns without fear of being targeted or punished for their actions.

Instead, we continue to see the rights of the most powerful corporations trump the rights of people and the environment in Ontario. As a result, people continue to lose faith in our democratic process and the ability of our governments to protect our rights and to protect our environment.

As a politician, one of my most ambitious goals, I believe, since being elected is to try to help restore people's hope in politics and to engage people in the political process in this province, to make sure that we have a politics that puts the public interest first, a politics that protects the commons—our soil and our water—and a politics that encourages people to be active and to be engaged in determining our future together.

Bill 83 is an important step forward towards fostering and protecting a democracy that reflects these values. That's why I'm happy to support this bill.

As I said, I don't have further comments. I do appreciate the chance to speak here today. I would strongly encourage the government, after hours of debate and years in the making, to ask for this to be voted on as soon as possible and to move this into committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I think Bill 83 has been spoken to quite a bit. Let's get this into committee and move it forward, for many of the reasons cited, to help Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I commend the member from Davenport. I respect the fact that you want to be on the record, making certain comments.

Why this is so important is, we need to have clarity on the government's full intention. When you hear members on the other side—they are the government. They have the numbers. They can call this question. They have full control. You have the right to do that. The Attorney General and the House leader was here, and there are other ministers in the House as well.

But the voices that put to it this afternoon—I know there are other speakers who are very anxious to represent their constituents. To suggest in this chamber that those members should be denied the opportunity to put the voices of their constituents on the record is simply not acceptable.

On a Thursday afternoon, just before the March break, this government calls a bill, knowing there are speakers on it. If they want this anti-SLAPP bill to pass, they have the authority. I have confidence that the NDP will be supporting them. In fact, I have every confidence that the NDP will be supporting their budget. There's a coalition here.

We're the only real voice protecting the small people in Ontario, the people like my constituents in the riding of Durham who came here today.

The Minister of the Environment approved, without any consultation with my constituents, a transformer, five school buses in size, on top of the Oak Ridges moraine. They were—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask the member to please turn his questions and comments to the bill that's in front of us.

1720

Mr. John O'Toole: I understand that, Speaker, and respectfully, the application of the strategic lawsuit is no different than a minister placing an order on a person to expropriate their land. Unless they have fair representation and fair voice, then they're not being listened to, and the government is bullying them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I endorse the comments made by my friend and colleague from Davenport. I urge the new Progressive Conservative Party, which expresses so much support for the little guy—in fact, professes a great deal to be on the side of the little guy—to move this bill along so that we can hear from the new Progressive Conservatives in committee with all of the concerns you're raising, so that we could move this along.

I urge my fine Liberal friends who control the Legislative Assembly, and control the agenda of the assembly, to move this issue along, if you can.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, there are two parties that want to move this forward and bring the public in at committee. There's one party that appears to want to keep the public excluded, and I think that's too bad.

It's time to move ahead on this. Everything's been said.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Davenport, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I will just finish by saying that this is an inherently good piece of legislation that will protect the democratic rights of people in this province, and I see no reason for the government not to move this bill forward into committee. I encourage them to do that today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's great to be here on a Thursday afternoon talking about Bill 83 and the importance of the ability in one's self to express your opinions openly, not just here in the House—and I'm going to get to that in a moment, Mr. Speaker—but out in public.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Without fear of being bullied.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Without fear of being bullied, absolutely.

Mr. Speaker, we've all agreed in this House on other pieces of legislation that bullying is obviously wrong. We acknowledge that. This is what we instill in our children, that that's not the kind of behaviour that we condone.

I do want to talk to the bill directly. It says here, in the process of dismissal of proceeding that limits debate, 137.1, section 1(a), "to encourage individuals to express themselves on matters of public interest;

"(b) to promote broad participation in debates on matters of public interest."

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we do here in the House. To the member from Durham's concerns, and other members here, for the government to actually say that we don't have the democratic right to stand up and view the opinions of our constituents, of the individuals who we represent—this is the kind of thing that we're actually trying to pass legislation—and to get to committee too. So I find it rather ironic that the third party and the governing Liberal Party want to rush this to committee without any kind of checks or balances in the process.

Being Canadian—and I say this sincerely—all of us here agree that we have the fundamental values that individuals can speak and express their own opinions without being persecuted for those, aside from anything that's hateful or disrespectful in that kind of manner or tone. This is what many of our grandfathers and our fathers fought for in the Second World War. We have troops abroad today who sacrifice their lives and their families out there, who have given the ultimate sacrifice to enable us to stand here today, the fine men and women

who represent their ridings, and express our opinions, our thoughts—the thoughts and opinions not only of ourselves, but the thoughts and opinions of our constituents, in the honour of respecting those who have come before us, whether they were fortunate enough to actually sit here in this hallowed chamber or have given up the ultimate sacrifice to fight against oppressive and tyrannous regimes that try to bully or suppress that.

On that note, there are events currently going on, as you well know, globally, around the world. I might point to the situation in Ukraine right now. What ends up happening is we have this bill before us, Bill 83, which discourages this type of thing.

I want to speak to the bill directly once again, when it refers on page 3 here to damages:

“(9) If, in dismissing a proceeding under this section, the judge finds that the responding party brought the proceedings in bad faith or for an improper purpose, the judge may award the moving party such damages as the judge considers appropriate.”

Again, when I read and review bills that I debate in the House here, I do look at language, and when the bill does get to committee, this is an area that I think we need to address: the language “moving party such damages as the judge considers appropriate.”

We have to be very careful, as legislators, to ensure that the intent of bills—and one thing I have come to realize is that all bills, pretty much all bills that come to the floor here, are not perfect. They are microcosms of one’s self, you could almost say.

There have to be amendments made. There have to be little antidotes that we read into it, and look at the legislation to ensure that it’s not perceived to be interpreted in the wrong sense. This is where, if we give leeway to judges to consider appropriate damages or fines, we have to maybe draw some parameters or give some kind of framework to ensure that judges have a clear understanding of what their duty and role is pertaining to this particular bill. Otherwise, judges are only human, the court system is only human, and how are judges, without being given a clear and concise directive from the legislative body here, going to give interpretation on their own reconnaissance?

The other thing that I would like to mention here is this:

“Motion to be heard within 60 days

“(2) A motion under section 137.1 shall be heard no later than 60 days after notice of the motion is filed with the court.”

I have two uncles who are former Metro police officers; one actually dealt with the court system here in Toronto. It’s my understanding and appreciation that our court system is already backed up to such an extent that we have actual cases where individuals who have committed severe crimes to the public are being released or relinquished because there’s due process and that time frame allowed. There have been rulings where these individuals are released because they were not brought

forward in a timely manner. So I have some serious concerns.

1730

Again, once we get this to committee, this is something that perhaps we could look at and make an amendment to, because 60 days, two months—if you’ve had any experiences, or if you go and talk to many of the criminal offence lawyers who deal day-to-day with these types of activities, they will say to you, “Sixty days? Two months? It will be remanded again and remanded again.” That costs the taxpayers of this province millions of dollars annually in remands and shuffling and refiguring dates.

This is where I have some serious concern with Bill 83. I think, as stated by many of the members here this afternoon, there are good intentions here. I think that once we get it to committee, we can work with the government to make those amendments and solidify some of the issues that I’ve brought up here this afternoon.

I just want to touch quickly on what the member from Davenport said. He made some good points about protecting soil and water, and his whole approach to saving the environment. This is all fantastic, but to the member from Davenport, you’re supporting a Liberal government that actually takes regulations and ignores their own regulations to put industrial wind turbines on the Oak Ridges moraine, which is protected land.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It’s very clear to me, Speaker, that the member from Northumberland—Quinte West doesn’t want to move this bill along. It’s quite clear to me that the defenders of the so-called Conservative Party who support the little guy don’t want to move this bill along. We need to look to the Liberals to be leaders and move this along.

It’s obvious to me. These guys are going to talk forever, because they don’t want to send it to committee. Given that you Liberals have the power to move this along, I’m expecting one of you to say soon, “We’re going to deal with this and we’re going to get it going.” That’s what I want to hear from a Liberal, some Liberals, a minister, some ministers, and see whether we can get this done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me deal with the last member first. He knows the rules of the House extremely well. The rules simply state that every member can speak on a bill for 10 minutes, 20 minutes; whatever it may be. The only other way to do this is to bring a closure motion. We, as the government, can do that, but in order to get that closure motion actually passed, we need the support of the third party to do that. You have never supported closure in your entire life—and I respect you for that. You know the game as well as I do. If you support closure, we will move closure.

Let’s just deal with the other member. We are talking about civil court cases here. We’re not talking about

criminal cases here. These are cases where actions are being brought by different interests against somebody for expressing their view. This has got nothing to do with criminal court. In civil cases, in most court jurisdictions in this province, there are motions heard at least once a week in smaller court locations, and almost daily in the larger court locations. That's when a motion like this will be heard.

This has nothing to do with the way criminal courts are clogged up. It's in a totally different system. We're talking about a civil court system here, where civil actions are tried. This is not in criminal court.

Please, members opposite: We've got four eloquent members of the Conservative Party that are in the House right now. There are four great members here. Do the right thing. Your leadership is gone. You're in charge. Allow this bill to pass today so we can take it to committee. These are very good members that are here, and I think they will do the right thing—

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Independent-thinking members.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Independent-thinking members; they sure are. They will allow this bill to pass, since we all agree, so it can go to committee. Do the right thing: Show some independent spirit.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Northumberland—Quinte West has my deepest respect. The way you framed it, I think, is most revealing of your belief in the system and the fairness of the system itself, the right to dissent, the right to have a voice and the right to be heard in the Legislature. I commend you for your remarks.

But I'm most surprised by the call to arms by the Attorney General. I think this should be on the record clearly: He has called on his brothers—and sisters, of course—to join him in moving this motion along. He talked about a closure motion, asking, in this public forum, for the NDP to vote against their own conscience. In fact, you could suggest he's bullying the NDP into voting with them on a closure motion.

What this motion is about is Bill 83, which is really about the right to speak. "SLAPP" means strategic lawsuit against public participation. The real conundrum here or the problem here is, we have the spokesperson for justice in Ontario encouraging the NDP to break with their traditional values, however we might agree or disagree with them, to join them in a coalition this afternoon. I'm surprised.

If you didn't listen to the remarks from the member from Northumberland—Quinte West, you've missed the entire point. We, the Conservatives on this side, if we could trust the government, a government that in my riding alone has had two issues where they've ignored—on Bill 150, the Green Energy Act, they denied—the Minister of Municipal Affairs is here—the voice of municipalities to speak against and have a fair hearing on renewable energy. That was done by this—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: The other one is—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I need to remind the House—sometimes over these debates, we forget some of the things that have transpired in the past. Some of the members and the minister would certainly remember, although one member from the third party would recall. But it seemed to be a member from their party who spoke for two years, Ms. Papatello—I think I can use her name now that she's not part of the House—in committee and shut down complete debate and ended the debate for two years.

Interjections.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Yes, the entire time.

Hon. John Gerretsen: A year, I believe.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: No, she spoke for two years straight and every time in order to stop—if you would recall, the legislation at the time was recall legislation. She did not like that, or whatever the case may be. She exercised her parliamentary right to speak for that entire time. Every time the debate came up in committee, it did not end.

As a result of that, there were changes brought in this Legislature that brought forward what the Attorney General mentioned about the ability to speak for an hour, for 20 minutes and 10 minutes. That was the compromise to ensure that those sort of things don't happen in the future.

But there's a number of questions, and I do hope to get to talk on this because I have a couple of questions. There are some concerns. Some of the organizations have stressed the concerns. For example, in the forestry sector, some have stood up on this particular issue, where the issue is that it could be utilized to stop their process from taking place. What happens in Ontario in the forestry sector is, for example, there are certain periods of time that you can get your wood out. It's called winter wood. Everything's frozen, and you're allowed to get in, do your cuts and bring the stuff out. A 60-day time frame would eliminate that process if that process is shut down. We just want to make sure that these things are not part of what's taking place here and be sure that all aspects of whatever takes place in this allows the businesses to continue on.

Not only that, I hope to talk about a couple of other areas that need to be addressed as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Northumberland—Quinte West, you have two minutes.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I want to thank the members for their comments. I do truly appreciate the wisdom and experience that some members like the Attorney General bring to this chamber and the member from Oshawa, my very good friend Jerry Ouellette, and of course the member from Durham, Mr. O'Toole, is an institution unto himself when it comes to the memory and the knowledge base that he brings forward. I just want to acknowledge that, Mr. Speaker.

1740

I do want to thank the Attorney General for pointing out, and correctly so, the difference between criminal cases and civil cases. I just have one question. I'm not a lawyer. I'm actually thankful that I'm not a lawyer. I don't know what the backlog in civil case law is, but I'm sure it's probably extensive, given the fact that we know what our legal system is. I would like to, perhaps, get some research done on the backlog in our civil court system and what that does.

I also do want to point out that here we have the ability to express our opinions, our thoughts, and this is what Bill 83 is all about. The member from Oshawa pointed out that because of other members going on for two years—I can't even fathom what you could talk to a bill for two years about. I thought maybe a one-hour lead might be overstretching for some, but—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to rise and speak about this bill in front of us, the so-called SLAPP bill.

The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane and I have some things in common. We both come from an agriculture background. Also, we volunteered, like all members of the Legislature, for our communities. We did things that we weren't paid for because we wanted to improve our communities and maybe improve the industries that we're involved with.

The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane was president of the OFA—certainly a great organization in the province of Ontario. I belonged to a service club. We built things. We put money towards things. But I have never had the experience of being involved, like he was, in a SLAPP suit. It scares the devil out of me, because I can think back to some things that we were involved with in my community. It's a little town called Monkton, which is just north of Stratford, about half an hour. I think back to some lands that we were trying to acquire—I'm sorry; we weren't trying to acquire. There was a company trying to acquire them, and there were some significant woodlots involved.

I'm not going to pick sides here, because I can see both sides of the equation. But I can imagine, if this had happened to those people who had opposed the removing of some of these trees, and a company as large as the one that was involved decided to use a technique such as this to get them to back off—it's quite scary.

We just heard about the member over here not being able to borrow from his bank to put his crops in. It's incredible just what can happen with these things.

He told us of his experience—and certainly the author of that book last night deserved it when he won that award on fighting the big guys. When they have a tool such as this that they can use to in fact muzzle you so that you can't do anything, it scares the daylight out of you. Certainly, the amounts of money that can be sued for—no normal person can afford that type of thing. Unless

you have a lot of backing behind you, you almost have to back off on these things.

This bill is a bill that is designed to combat SLAPPs in Ontario. It establishes a formal legal process for assessing suits to determine if they are SLAPPs and disposing of them, if so. That's a great part of this bill. I think that's what has to be done. I really didn't know a lot about this issue until I studied it a little bit and what it could do, but I can understand why we need to do that.

Also, Bill 83, if it's enacted, would help better define what SLAPPs are by building judicial precedent via the new legal process. It would also assist minimally with court backlogs, as it would ensure meritless SLAPP cases are not using scarce court resources. These cases would be dismissed. That's another part of the bill that I think has quite a bit of merit to it because it does cost a lot of money to go to court: in fees and paying our judges whatever and the staff who work there. If they have the ability to tie up our court system with issues such as this, especially if they are frivolous and not warranted, the money spent can be quite substantial.

I also read that, in essence, Bill 83 establishes a framework that allows an individual to determine if a lawsuit brought against them is a SLAPP or not within a 60-day time frame. I can understand that there may be some issues with this, especially with remote areas of our province where time is an issue; logging, as stated, might be an example. It is done in the wintertime, and you have so much time to do these things before spring thaw comes along and leaves logging roads inaccessible.

Also, there has been an example even in municipal politics where a SLAPP suit was brought by a municipality because a mayor did not like what the press was saying about him. To me, that is going way over the top.

We need to address these issues and get them looked after because it is only fair. It's something that different people are looking at, and it certainly has to be done right for it to work.

I think, too, back to my days in municipal politics. We had a good relationship with the press. I know it's something that we all have to deal with down here in a bigger scope. Certainly, I found that most of the time, whenever I said something either in council or directly to the press, it was reported impartially, and that's what I appreciated about it. I also knew that I had to be honest with the press and that if I said something wrong or something that I didn't want to appear in the press but I said it anyway, it was going to get put there, but I shouldn't have the right to shut that down.

I look around the world at some of the things that are going on, where people are denied their right to do things, and we say that shouldn't be allowed in those countries. We're fortunate that we live in this country where we have freedom of speech and freedom to do a lot of other things. However, this seems to me to be a technique that is probably being used somewhat wrongly and needs to be adjusted to make sure that people use it properly and also that people aren't afraid to do things in their communities for fear of being sued.

We've had a number of developers in our area—I can think of some people—who want to install gravel pits in our area. They should have the right to do that. They should have the right to explore whether it is viable, and they should have a right to go through all the permitting process that is legal.

1750

However, some of the contractors that are doing these types of things, there are some smaller ones, and I can see how this type of legislation could maybe scare some of them off. Everybody should have the right to speak about things that are going on in their communities. I could understand why some businesses may be a little afraid to tackle some things, especially if they have heard of this type of thing, and maybe there will be a time when it could be used against them.

It's my opinion that it is a bill that needs to go to committee. Maybe I'm going to hear suggestions that, "Well, why don't you sit down and let it go to committee?" However, I have always been told since I've been here, and on my council days, that I have a right to stand up and speak, and I'm taking the time to do that. That's why we're here, and that's why we like to speak on behalf of our constituents. We try to do as good a job as we can.

Speaker, I only have a couple seconds left—if I can get rid of this tickle in my throat, I've got a couple seconds left. Anyway, I think that we need to get it past this second reading into committee, get it looked at and, if it needs to be amended in certain parts, get that amending done and get this bill done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Barrie on a point of order.

Mr. Rod Jackson: If it pleases the Speaker, I'd like to just take a quick moment to thank all of the pages for their hard work and dedication. I know the Speaker did it earlier today, but I really do want them all to know how much we appreciate all the hard work that they do here. Certainly, for the past few weeks, it's very much appreciated.

It has also allowed me to spend the past three weeks with my daughter, Abbey. It means a lot to me, and I know it means a lot to you guys, and you'll never forget it. I just want to thank you very much for all of that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Another point of order, the member for Barrie.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I appreciate your indulgence, Speaker. In the last hours of this House before we go away for one more week, I hope that we can have unanimous consent to have a moment of silence in solidarity of those who have lost their lives in Ukraine in the defence of democracy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Barrie has asked for unanimous consent for a moment of silence for those in Ukraine. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Getting back to Bill 83, I have been told that we've had nine hours of debate. I get it: Everyone has an opportunity to debate it if they wish. But I'm hearing also a desire to get it to committee, so let's do that. It's time to get this bill to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate again the opportunity because I don't believe I'm going to get a chance to talk about it, but there are a couple of things.

I would just remind the members that at one point I brought in a bill to effectively do this very thing, except with municipal councils and with school boards: to give them the immunity in those boards to be able to say what they want to say in the same fashion that we have here, for their protection and to give them the ability to speak their minds a certain way. I have tried to move similar legislation forward through this chamber to try and assist those individuals.

But there are a number of questions that need to be answered in regard to this. One would be there are other facets or ways that individuals have the opportunity to make presentations, and, quite frankly, I want to protect those individuals. I just want to make sure it's not abused.

For example, I know the ministers here would probably be overwhelmed with an issue in their constituency offices right now regarding one of the decisions that the government made on the spring bear hunt and what's taking place there. There are thousands of emails being issued in that regard to try and delay or stop what's taking place on that decision that they have made. The concern there is that there is an EBR posting that allowed for public input on that, and if individuals who are not supportive of that in giving, quite frankly, northern Ontario the ability to make decisions as they see fit in a part of their communities, because the bear issue in the north is substantially different than it is in southern Ontario, is that allowance to be posted there one way that these individuals have that opportunity? So other individuals who may not be supportive of it and are flooding everybody's inboxes with these emails—I can tell you that on one day I think we got 3,000 on this issue, on both sides of it—is it another forum that they can utilize to their advantage to delay that process with the decisions the government has made?

Hopefully, the Attorney General will be able to give us some insight as to whether this is going to be one of the impacts of this legislation, or have they looked at that aspect at all? I'm not quite sure yet, but I hope to hear the answer.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to speak on Bill 83 and respond to the member from Perth-Wellington. I would just like it to be on the record that I

find the member for Perth–Wellington always speaks from the heart, and I appreciate that.

I would also like to mention the member from Oshawa. He stood up a couple of times today, and he has brought up valid points, points that people in my riding are concerned about, people across the north, particularly forest areas, and I think we are all very cognizant that we don't want anyone to abuse the legal system. We want people to be able to speak freely, but we don't want it to be abused by any individual or group. Here in the NDP, we truly believe that, and we want to move this bill forward and make sure that we can recognize where this bill might be abused and hopefully amend it, if it needs to be, in ways to ensure that the law fairly protects everyone—individuals, groups and corporations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Speaker, Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act, has had, I think over nine hours of debate. We have had some constructive suggestions from the member from Oshawa. I think we should send this to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Perth–Wellington, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I do appreciate the comments from the members from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Oshawa and the Minister of Community Safety.

As has been stated, changes to this law should not impede anyone from lawsuits or impede them from speaking their minds. I think that is the biggest thing here. We

need to let people be aware that they shouldn't be afraid of the law if they want to do something in their communities or wherever, because SLAPP means "strategic lawsuit against public participation." That's something that certainly has to be addressed. This will address that part of the law, and that's something that we all are looking for.

I look forward to this bill being passed and sent to committee and being brought back to the Legislature. The government knows they control this thing, so if it's that important, then they should get it through committee as fast as they can and get it back to the House, because that's the way things work around here.

Again, I feel that it's an important piece of legislation, and we need to address this as soon as we can. It's as important in the GTA as it is in the country, and so I think that constituents from all over Ontario should thank us for dealing with this in a speedy fashion.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, on a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I move unanimous consent that Bill 83—government order G83 be discharged at this point in time and be given second reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Attorney General seeks unanimous consent. Agreed? I heard a no.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, March 17 at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke–Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough–Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliot, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Wendell	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioe Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioe Lim

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Continued from back cover

Violence against women

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	5744
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	5744

Speaker's Book Award

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	5744
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	5744

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5744
-------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	5744
----------------------------	------

Northern Ontario Mining Supply Showcase

Mr. John Vanthof.....	5745
-----------------------	------

Schomberg Farm Tour

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	5745
------------------------	------

Disaster relief

Mr. Randy Pettapiece	5745
----------------------------	------

Norma Berti

Miss Monique Taylor.....	5746
--------------------------	------

Ranked balloting

Ms. Mitzie Hunter.....	5746
------------------------	------

Local Food Fund

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5746
--------------------------	------

Vaughan Film Festival

Mr. Steven Del Duca.....	5746
--------------------------	------

Transformer station

Mr. John O'Toole.....	5747
-----------------------	------

Visitors

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5747
------------------------	------

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week / Semaine de sensibilisation à l'agriculture canadienne

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5747
-----------------------------	------

International Women's Day

Hon. Teresa Piruzza.....	5748
--------------------------	------

Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5748
--------------------------	------

International Women's Day

Ms. Laurie Scott.....	5749
-----------------------	------

Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week

Mr. John Vanthof	5749
------------------------	------

International Women's Day

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	5750
------------------------	------

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Mr. Rob E. Milligan	5750
---------------------------	------

Hydro rates

Ms. Sarah Campbell	5750
--------------------------	------

Children's aid societies

Ms. Soo Wong.....	5751
-------------------	------

Air quality

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....	5751
-----------------------------	------

Tenant protection

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	5751
-------------------------	------

Environmental protection

Mr. Joe Dickson	5751
-----------------------	------

Environmental protection

Mr. John O'Toole.....	5752
-----------------------	------

Dog ownership

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	5752
-----------------------	------

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Mrs. Julia Munro	5752
------------------------	------

Taxation

Ms. Sarah Campbell	5752
--------------------------	------

LCBO outlet

Mr. Joe Dickson	5753
-----------------------	------

Cystic fibrosis

Mr. Jim Wilson.....	5753
---------------------	------

All-terrain vehicles

Mr. Jim McDonell.....	5753
-----------------------	------

Government services

Ms. Sarah Campbell	5753
--------------------------	------

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Federal transfer payments

Mr. Joe Dickson	5753
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	5755
Ms. Sarah Campbell	5756
Hon. Linda Jeffrey.....	5756
Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	5757
Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	5758
Mr. Steven Del Duca.....	5759
Mr. Rob E. Milligan	5760
Mr. Joe Dickson	5761

Financial Accountability Act, 2014, Bill 160,	
Mr. Holyday / Loi de 2014 sur la responsabilité financière, projet de loi 160, M. Holyday	
Mr. Douglas C. Holyday	5761
Ms. Catherine Fife	5763
Mr. Monte McNaughton	5764
Mr. Percy Hatfield	5765
Mr. Steven Del Duca	5765
Mr. Michael Harris	5767
Mr. Rick Nicholls	5768
Mr. Douglas C. Holyday	5768
Visitors	
Mr. Victor Fedeli	5769
Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act, 2014, Bill 166,	
Ms. Hunter / Loi de 2014 sur un mode de scrutin préférentiel pour Toronto, projet de loi 166,	
Mme Hunter	
Ms. Mitzie Hunter	5769
Mrs. Julia Munro	5770
Mr. Jonah Schein	5771
Hon. John Gerretsen	5772
Mr. John O'Toole	5772
Mr. Michael Prue	5773
Mr. Steven Del Duca	5773
Mrs. Gila Martow	5774
Mr. Rosario Marchese	5774
Hon. Glen R. Murray	5775
Mr. Douglas C. Holyday	5775
Ms. Mitzie Hunter	5776
Federal transfer payments	
The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon)	5776
Financial Accountability Act, 2014, Bill 160,	
Mr. Holyday / Loi de 2014 sur la responsabilité financière, projet de loi 160, M. Holyday	
The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon)	5776
Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act, 2014, Bill 166,	
Ms. Hunter / Loi de 2014 sur un mode de scrutin préférentiel pour Toronto, projet de loi 166,	
Mme Hunter	
Second reading agreed to	5776
Federal transfer payments	
Motion agreed to	5777

Financial Accountability Act, 2014, Bill 160,	
Mr. Holyday / Loi de 2014 sur la responsabilité financière, projet de loi 160, M. Holyday	
Second reading negated	5777

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Protection of Public Participation Act, 2014, Bill 83,	
Mr. Gerretsen / Loi de 2014 sur la protection du droit à la participation aux affaires publiques, projet de loi 83, M. Gerretsen	
Mr. John Vanthof	5777
Hon. John Gerretsen	5779
Mr. John O'Toole	5779
Mr. Rosario Marchese	5780
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5780
Mr. John Vanthof	5780
Mr. Ted Arnott	5780
Mr. Jonah Schein	5782
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	5782
Mr. John O'Toole	5782
Mr. Frank Klees	5782
Mr. Ted Arnott	5783
Mr. Jonah Schein	5783
Mr. Shafiq Qadri	5784
Mr. John O'Toole	5784
Mr. Rosario Marchese	5784
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5784
Mr. Jonah Schein	5784
Mr. Rob E. Milligan	5784
Mr. Rosario Marchese	5785
Hon. John Gerretsen	5785
Mr. John O'Toole	5786
Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette	5786
Mr. Rob E. Milligan	5786
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	5787
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	5788
Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette	5788
Mr. John Vanthof	5788
Hon. Linda Jeffrey	5789
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	5789
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5789

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 6 March 2014 / Jeudi 6 mars 2014

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety (Statute Law Amendment) Act, 2014, Bill 117, Ms. Matthews / Loi de 2014 modifiant des lois afin d'améliorer les soins aux malades et la sécurité des pharmacies, projet de loi 117, Mme Matthews	
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	5723
Mr. John Vanthof.....	5726
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur.....	5726
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5726
Mme France Gélinas.....	5727
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	5727
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	5727
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur.....	5730
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	5730
M. Michael Mantha.....	5730
Mr. Mike Colle.....	5731
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	5731
Mrs. Jane McKenna.....	5731
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	5733

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Rob E. Milligan.....	5733
M. Michael Mantha.....	5733
M. Grant Crack.....	5733
Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	5733
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5733
Mrs. Amrit Mangat.....	5733
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5733
M. John Vanthof.....	5733
M. Mike Colle.....	5733
Ms. Soo Wong.....	5733
Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	5733
Hon. Linda Jeffrey.....	5733
Mr. Norm Miller.....	5733
Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	5733
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	5733

Legislative pages

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	5734
------------------------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Automotive industry

Mr. Tim Hudak.....	5734
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5734

Manufacturing jobs

Mr. Tim Hudak.....	5735
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5735

Energy policies

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5736
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5736
Hon. Bob Chiarelli.....	5737

Executive compensation

Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	5737
Hon. John Milloy.....	5737

Access to information

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday.....	5737
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5738

Automotive industry

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	5738
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5738
Hon. Eric Hoskins.....	5738

Access to information

Mr. John Fraser.....	5739
Hon. John Milloy.....	5739

Government's record

Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	5739
Hon. John Milloy.....	5740

Energy policies

Mr. Wayne Gates.....	5740
Hon. Eric Hoskins.....	5740
Hon. Bob Chiarelli.....	5740

Teachers' collective bargaining

Ms. Dipika Damerla.....	5741
Hon. Liz Sandals.....	5741

Wind turbines

Ms. Laurie Scott.....	5741
Hon. Bob Chiarelli.....	5741
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	5742

Hospital services

Mme France Gélinas.....	5742
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	5742

Information technology

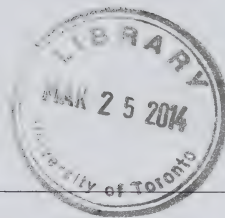
Ms. Mitzie Hunter.....	5742
Hon. Eric Hoskins.....	5743

Horse racing industry

Mr. Randy Pettapiece.....	5743
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5743

Continued on inside back cover

CA26N
X1
- D23



No. 112

N° 112

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 17 March 2014

Lundi 17 mars 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 17 March 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 17 mars 2014

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce to you today Miss Brianne Spiker, who is a journalism student at Ryerson University. She's from Midland and she's joining us at Queen's Park here today. Thank you. Welcome.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to extend a special welcome to His Worship Mayor Geoff Dawe and his wife, Henny Dawe, to the Legislature. He's here to observe how well you conduct the business of this Legislature. He's had a tour of the place. I will have the privilege of having lunch with him to discuss the important matters of business in the town of Aurora.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Tim Chapman, a former theatre administrator from the Tarragon Theatre in the city of Toronto. Welcome. It's his first time at Queen's Park.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my privilege and pleasure to introduce Calvin Devries, one of our pages from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome members from the Anatolian Heritage Federation to the House: Ahmet Tamirci, Saadettin Ozcan, Fatih Yegul and Anar Mehraliyev. They're having an event in committee rooms 228 and 230. I invite every member of the House to attend this event.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to introduce a large contingent of our Tamil Canadian community, but in the spirit of being expeditious—we do want to get on with question period—I'll introduce just three of them, as they've brought their friends: Shan Thayaparan, Ken Kirupa and Nita Kang. Welcome, all, to Queen's Park.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to welcome today members of the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario. Angie Heydon is here and Keri Selkirk, who is not only the president of the association, but she's ED of the Thames Valley Family Health Team. Welcome.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It gives me great pleasure introducing members of the HOOPP executive attending question period today. Two of them are here from the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan: There's Jim Keohane, the president and CEO, and Victoria Hubbell,

who's the senior vice-president of strategy and stakeholder relations.

I may add that this afternoon, HOOPP is hosting a symposium on pension security. The event begins at 3 o'clock in the MaRS Discovery District auditorium. All MPPs are invited to attend the event as well as the reception, which will begin at 5 o'clock.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and welcome to Queen's Park.

CANADIAN MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader, on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that a representative from each caucus make a brief statement marking the end of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to make a statement on the completion of the Afghan mission. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, last week all three parties asked that the Canadian flag at the Ontario Legislature be lowered to half-mast to mark the end of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan. We did this to recognize the service of the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces who served in Afghanistan and to honour those who have lost their lives serving our country.

We are fortunate to live in a province and a country where we are able to express ourselves freely and where we are able to debate our political differences peacefully. These are the values our servicemen and servicewomen brought to their mission in Afghanistan. As Premier, and along with all MPPs in this Legislature, we pay tribute and honour those serving our country, and demonstrate our gratitude to these great men and women.

I would like to move unanimous consent that following remarks from all three parties, we observe a moment of silence for the Canadian men and women who have fallen as part of that mission.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Premier is seeking unanimous consent to observe a moment's silence after the dedication from the other two parties. Do we agree? Agreed.

Further comments.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to join my colleague Premier Wynne and the leader of the third party, Ms.

Horwath, in bringing remarks on the end of Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

The end of the mission in Afghanistan last week also marked the end of the longest war fought by the brave men and women in our Canadian Armed Forces. That longest war in our history was not without human cost. The war cost the lives of 158 soldiers, one diplomat, one journalist, two civilian contractors and, of course, beyond that, the uncountable injuries of both body and mind of those who did come home safely and of their families.

But much was won in Afghanistan in the fight against global terrorism and in the defence of freedom. One thing I noticed is that Canadians were often very modest about our accomplishments on the world stage, much more so than our neighbours to the south. I know all of us in our own ridings and across the province would find it immensely stirring during parades when the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces would march by, how the crowds would stand and cheer and salute and send out their thanks. Canadians are immensely proud of our brave men and women in the military and their families.

1040

I say with full assurance, and I know Canadians would agree, that despite our modesty as Canadians, there is nothing more fearsome to the enemy or comforting to the vanquished than the sight of a Canadian soldier in uniform—skilled, determined, incredibly courageous, and heroes all.

Speaker, I've yet to meet a Canadian soldier who has not defended Canada, answering the call post-9/11, who fights for freedom and safety for family and neighbours back at home. They're proud of what they've done. They also talk about the life-changing experiences that they had by helping to rebuild Afghanistan, by helping to spread what we take for granted in freedom, by building schools and communities, communities that were once schools and places of worship destroyed by the Taliban. As the father of a daughter—and I guess I'll say this, Speaker, of another little one to come—it made me immensely proud and it stirred my heart to see Afghani girls who can go to school safely.

When you're half a world away from the place you call home, when every day is a danger, it's quite an understatement to say that life can be tough, but it can also be incredibly elevating. Bringing hope to the hopeless is no easy task, but it is a task incredibly well done by the men and women of our armed forces.

As leader of the Ontario PCs and as a husband and a father who watched the many repatriations along the Highway of Heroes, I can only salute a job well done by each and every member of our Canadian Armed Forces. Our role now is to ensure those incredible sacrifices and works of valour are never forgotten.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: New Democrats stand together with the other members of the Legislature in honouring the immense sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform.

Spanning more than 12 years, the Canadian mission in Afghanistan cost the lives, as the Leader of the Opposition mentioned, of 158 soldiers, one diplomat, one journalist and two civilian contractors. Their friends and families have lost their loved ones forever. So we honour the memory of so many who lost their lives during the mission and so many others who continue to go on without them.

We need to be there for the veterans who have returned and are returning home. Veterans and their families need support: Post-traumatic stress can have a devastating toll on soldiers and their loved ones. So as we stand in this Legislature today and mark the sacrifice, mark the commitment and mark the duty that sent so many soldiers over to Afghanistan, let us not forget that we have a duty to them as well, those who have returned, to make sure that they're able to cope with some of the things that they experienced, witnessed and lived through in the horrors of that war.

The transition back to life at home can be difficult, and we need to ensure that people who served bravely get the support that they need at home. There shouldn't be any hesitation when it comes to not only helping the people who have returned, but also their loved ones and the families of our heroes.

The road toward lasting peace in Afghanistan is still a long one. The Canadian government must also redouble its efforts on development and diplomatic efforts to ensure that Canada can leave a true legacy that's lasting—of greater peace and of prosperity and freedom for all Afghans. I'm glad that the Leader of the Opposition mentioned the issue of education particularly. That is something New Democrats have always been supportive of, and I think Liberals and Conservatives as well.

The bottom line is, there are many positive things that Canadians contributed in Afghanistan, and one of the things that we want to ensure is that those contributions have a lasting legacy and we're able to see an Afghanistan that is truly supportive of all her people.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would now ask that all members of the Legislature and those visiting please stand to observe a moment of silence, to honour those men and women who have completed their tours in Afghanistan, and those who have lost their lives, and their families.

The House observed a moment's silence.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: In the spirit of working together, I would seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 156, An Act to proclaim the month of January Tamil Heritage Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: I move that the order for second reading of Bill 156, An Act to proclaim the month of January Tamil Heritage Month be immediately called and that the question shall be put immediately without further debate or amendment.

Should Bill 156 receive second reading, the bill shall be ordered for third reading, and that the order shall immediately be called, and the question put without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

TAMIL HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE TAMOUL

Mr. Smith moved second reading of the following bill: Bill 156, An Act to proclaim the month of January Tamil Heritage Month / Projet de loi 156, Loi proclamant le mois de janvier Mois du patrimoine tamoul.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Agreed? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

TAMIL HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE TAMOUL

Mr. Smith moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 156, An Act to proclaim the month of January Tamil Heritage Month / Projet de loi 156, Loi proclamant le mois de janvier Mois du patrimoine tamoul.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Agreed? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

1050

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Mississauga East–Cooksville on a point of order.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I would ask the House to grant me the same support that the member from Prince Edward–Hastings received moments ago on a similar proclamation bill, and therefore I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 72, An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Mississauga East–Cooksville is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, I move that the May 30, 2013, order of the House referring Bill 72, An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills be discharged and that the order for third reading of Bill 72 be

immediately called and the question put on the motion for third reading of the bill without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Agreed? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

POPE JOHN PAUL II DAY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE JOUR DU PAPE JEAN-PAUL II

Ms. Damerla moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 72, An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day / Projet de loi 72, Loi proclamant le Jour du Pape Jean-Paul II.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Scarborough–Agincourt on a point of order.

Ms. Soo Wong: In light of the member from Prince Edward–Hastings's success in passing his motion for his own bill and the spirit of co-operation that we see here today, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 53, An Act to proclaim Children and Youth in Care Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Scarborough–Agincourt is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Ms. Soo Wong: I move that the May 9, 2013, order of the House referring Bill 53, An Act to proclaim Children and Youth in Care Day to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged and that the order for third reading of Bill 53 be immediately called and the question put on the motion for third reading of the bill without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE DAY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE JOUR DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES PRIS EN CHARGE

Ms. Wong moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act to proclaim Children and Youth in Care Day / Projet de loi 53, Loi proclamant le Jour des enfants et des jeunes pris en charge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to move a motion without notice to reverse the closure of the Kemptville agricultural college and the Alfred agricultural college.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville is seeking unanimous consent to reverse the closure of the Kemptville college. Do we agree? I heard a no.

The member from Timmins–James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, in the mood that we're in today, I hope we can get unanimous consent to get into question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for question period. The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: A very simple and straightforward question to the Premier: Premier, exactly which taxes do you plan to raise in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question, and I just say to him that we are committed, as we have said for a number of months, to building transit and building transportation infrastructure in this province. We've been clear about that. We have stated that we will bring a plan forward in the budget, and we will do that. And we will do that in the fairest way possible. There will be a transparent fund. It will be clear which projects we are going to build. We recognize that in our urban centres and in the GTHA, transit is a burning issue, but we also recognize that in our rural and northern communities, roads and bridges and water systems—those pieces of infrastructure are critical. So we're going to continue to build infrastructure. We're going to continue to make investments in this province, and I hope that the leader opposite will join us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: If the Premier is asking if we'll support increasing taxes on families and job creators in the province of Ontario—absolutely not. I mean, here's the difference: You believe taxes should go up in the province; I believe they should come down to encourage job creation and get us moving again.

Unfortunately, the Liberal record on taxes is a rather poor one, to say the least. Before elections, Dalton McGuinty, or I suspect now Premier Wynne, will say they're not going to increase taxes. And then you brought in the HST and you brought in the health tax. You

brought in an income tax increase. You brought in a business tax increase. And now we're getting very evasive answers on exactly which taxes you want to raise. Basically, you said you're going to increase income taxes again, but you said you're not going to tax the middle class; you're going to tax other income earners. So, Premier, maybe we can get some more clarity here and end the cat-and-mouse game. How do you exactly define “middle class” when it comes to income taxes in our province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Leader of the Opposition says that there's a difference between us, and there absolutely is a difference between us. There is a fundamental difference. The difference is that we are going to make and have been making and will continue to make investments in the people of this province.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Tax them right out of the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin–Caledon, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We will continue to work with business in partnership, and we will continue to invest in infrastructure. What the Leader of the Opposition has put forward is what I would call a “non-plan,” but it is an initiative that would cut and slash across the board, that would slash services. I do not believe that that is what is needed in this province right now.

What we need is an aspirational plan, an understanding that investment in communities is what is necessary. That is what we will bring forward in our budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: But the problem, Premier, with your aspirational plan is your only aspiration is to increase taxes and put us deeper into debt. I think that got us into a significant mess.

Now, Premier, you won't tell us how you're going to define “middle class,” but you are going to increase income tax. I guess that is clear. I appreciate the fact that you said that there's a fundamental difference between you and I; I would agree. I just wish we saw a fundamental difference between you and Dalton McGuinty. It seems like it's pretty much two sides of the same coin.

1100

You also said that you're going to increase business tax. You'd increase taxes on job creators in our province. In 2011, you said that raising corporate taxes would create “a chill in the job increases we've seen”—Canadian Press, May 26. At a time when a million people have no job in the province of Ontario, Premier, why are you considering increasing taxes on job creators? Or were you wrong in 2011?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not sure what—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's give the member for Northumberland–Quinte West an opportunity to stop—and it will.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the Leader of the Opposition knows full well, we have cut taxes to small business. We understand that small business needs that support, and as recently as this year, we have cut the payroll taxes for small businesses.

But what we know at this point in our history is that it is very important that we make investments in the province and that we work in partnership with business. That is not the strategy of the Leader of the Opposition. He believes that cutting and slashing across the board is what needs to happen. We just don't accept that. We believe that it is very important that we make sure that young people have the training they need and that people who have lost their job have a way back into the job market. Often, retraining is what they need.

He also does not accept the notion that investing in transit and investing in transportation infrastructure in the immediate term creates jobs and in the long term creates economic prosperity.

That's the fundamental difference between him and me. I believe that investing and making sure that communities have the support they need is what needs to happen. He believes that cutting and dividing is what needs to happen. We don't accept that.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier, Speaker. Here's the difference: I've got a million jobs plan to put people back to work in the province of Ontario.

Here's the other concern I have. Part of our million jobs plan is to make sure that we have a government that spends within its means, just like families have to do every day, just like businesses have to do every day. But my finance critic has uncovered senior Ministry of Finance officials who paint a very different picture of Ontario's finances from what you said yourself, Premier, in 2013. A Ministry of Finance document that you've seen says that there are "no plans in place to achieve out-year deficit targets from 2012 budget." So there's no plan to balance the books. You say in your budget that you're on track to balance the budget.

If a CFO or CEO were found to be misleading shareholders on the finances, they'd be fired. So, Premier, what do you think we should do with you?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Leader of the Opposition, had he taken the time to read the fall economic statement, would have seen that the numbers get updated. He also would know that on page 2 of that document, we said: "Uncertainty in the global economy is leading to lower revenue growth. Ontario's revenues are more than"—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think you should hear this because you haven't read it. "Ontario's revenues are more than \$5 billion lower than projected since the 2010 budget."

We are constantly updating numbers.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think you already know.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. And let's bring it down.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is the government's responsibility to understand what is changing in the fiscal and the economic situation, so of course we work with our officials, and there are numbers that are updated, changes that are made. We run scenarios; we look at options. That's how you develop a responsible policy position, and that's what we are doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, I disagree. I think that people expect the government to be honest with taxpayers about the true state of finances—another fundamental difference, as you characterize it, between you and me.

You went further, Premier. This is not a one-shot occurrence. There were several examples of how you and the Minister of Finance said one thing and your finance officials said the other, when it came to the budget last year.

Your finance officials, we've now discovered, said that for 2014-15 and 2015-16, the government is "not on track to meet 2012 budget deficit targets." That's what the finance officials said. A few weeks later, you said the opposite. You said that you were on track.

People watch this closely—not only taxpayers who are stuck with the bill, but businesses that want to invest in this province, and credit rating agencies. If the Premier and the finance minister are saying one thing and finance officials who look at and crunch the numbers are saying the opposite, how can we actually trust—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Tim Hudak:—province of Ontario? Isn't that enough to say it's time for a change, and new leadership that will be honest—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would just remind the Leader of the Opposition that we are the party, we are the government that passed a law that says that before a budget, there has to be an opening up of the books. Before an election, there has to be an opening up of the books.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: And why did we have to do that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Because he will remember that when we came in in 2003 as a government, \$5.6 billion had not been disclosed to the province as a deficit. That's what we discovered when we came in. So we passed a law that makes it necessary, mandatory for the books to be opened before an election, Mr. Speaker.

But I just want to make sure that people understand what the Leader of the Opposition is doing. He's taking material out of context from finance officials, materials

that are part of a discussion with government officials in the development of a budget, in the development of policy. Had he read the fall economic statement, he would have seen that the numbers had been updated. That's what responsible government does: We update numbers and we develop our policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Unfortunately, Premier, your shell game is up. People are on to the fact that you say one thing and do the opposite. You told all of us that you were going to be different from Dalton McGuinty; I'm seeing more and more of the same.

I remind you again, these are official Ministry of Finance documents from the run-up to the last budget, and I'm comparing what the finance officials said to what you said a few weeks later in the budget. Not only were you inaccurate when it came to the deficit figures, you were also dramatically inaccurate when it came to jobs in the province. Ministry of Finance documents say, "The economy has not yet regained the strength of pre-2008. There are fewer jobs relative to our population and more unemployed...." Yet a few weeks later, you said the exact opposite.

Premier, if you're going to invest in a company, if you're going to invest in the province, you want to know that you're actually getting the hard facts, that you're getting the truth. One of the reasons we have a million unemployed in the province of Ontario is we can't trust you. We can't trust you; we can't trust Dalton McGuinty.

Will you actually table a budget, be honest with the people of Ontario? And if you're not going to be honest with the people of Ontario, just move aside. We'll come in. We'll clean up the mess and we'll put people back—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have to go back to the original gamut of this question, Mr. Speaker, because what the Leader of the Opposition is proposing for this province is devastating cuts across the board.

We are being very honest with the people of the province: We need to make investments. We were honest in the fall economic statement when we said that the revenue numbers that we had anticipated had not been realized and that there is a revenue hole. We are going to work very hard to put forward a budget that will make the investments that are necessary.

Meanwhile, the Leader of the Opposition has said that he will cut, he has said—and his critic for red tape, as recently as just a few days ago, last week, said that regulations that were put in place after the Walkerton water tragedy—"[W]e have to take a look at the ridiculousness of regulations," she said.

The radical and risky approach that the Leader of the Opposition puts forward is not in the best interests of the people of the province, and we will not go there.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Since she first took over the Liberal leadership from Dalton McGuinty, the Premier has insisted that it was absolutely essential for middle-class families to foot the bill for transit and transportation expansion. When anyone raised the concerns of families, who are feeling squeezed like never before, the Premier told them that they were behaving like children: She was having an adult conversation, and she'd get back to us when she was done.

Speaker, can the Premier tell us what her view is this week?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Despite the tone of the leader of the third party, what I will say to her is that I said no such thing. I have been clear that whatever revenue tools and whatever plan we brought forward was going to be fair, that it was going to be transparent and that it was going to allow us to continue to invest in transit and transportation infrastructure. I've been clear about that from the moment I took on this job. The only reason that, last week, I moved to say that it was necessary to make it clear that we are not going to increase HST or increase gas tax is that there was a lot of mischief that was being created by members across the floor by identifying, somehow, the notion that we had committed to making those increases. We had done no such thing. We are committed to building transit, and our plan will come forward in the budget.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I guess the Premier figured out that painting herself into a corner is pretty darn mischievous.

The Liberal government has made it clear that they plan to move ahead with more corporate tax cuts and new loopholes, and they've also committed to scrapping the fairness tax, giving a multi-million dollar tax break to Ontario's highest income earners. New Democrats have been consistent: It's not fair to ask families to pay more while handing out billions in breaks to people who need them the least. Can the Premier tell us what her view is this week?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The NDP, surprisingly, has been consistent in not supporting transit-building. They have not been supportive in building infrastructure. They have not been supportive in making investments that are necessary in this province. I say, that position I would have expected from the Conservatives. I would not have expected it from the NDP. I would have thought that the NDP would have been interested in working with us to come up with a plan that was fair and that would invest in people and would invest in infrastructure, particularly in transit in our urban centres that so many of

their members and so much of their history has been supportive of. But that does not seem to be the case, and it's very disappointing that they don't support that kind of investment in infrastructure.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I might want to remind the Premier that when she was transportation minister, she took \$4 billion out of transit.

Here's what people see: They see the same government that hit families with the HST and the highest hydro bills in Canada, the same government that bragged about their planned corporate tax giveaways and had to be dragged kicking and screaming to bring in the fairness tax on high-income earners, the same Liberals who told families feeling squeezed that they were behaving like children when they complained about the idea of even more new taxes, now say that they have a plan to protect middle-class families. Does the Premier really think people find her credible?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When I was Minister of Transportation, I did not take \$4 billion out of transit. We invested \$4 billion in transit, and the leader of the third party knows that full well. That was a cash flow issue. She knows perfectly well that those projects are under way. They are being built right now. So I will say to the leader of the third party: I believe that it is consistent with her party's past and their philosophy that she would be supporting the building of infrastructure, that she would support the investment in this province, whether it's in infrastructure in northern Ontario, whether it's in training programs, that she would support that kind of investment. Unfortunately, that is not the case. We will move ahead and bring a plan that will put those investments front and centre. I hope that parties on all sides of the House can support that plan.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. Unemployment in Ontario is the same this month as it was last month, and our unemployment rate continues to be stubbornly above the national average. Does the Premier think her status-quo job creation efforts are working, or will she look at something new?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the leader of the third party knows that there are jobs that are being created. It's true that the economic recovery has not been as quick as we would have liked it to have been. Some 100,000 new jobs have been created over the last year. She also will know that, in terms of youth employment, I think the update is that over 9,000 young people have placements because of the variety of tools that we've put in place to help young people get a placement. I believe that we need to continue to bring businesses to the province, and we need to help businesses that are here to expand. Investments like the support of Cisco—that's the kind of expansion that we want to make sure continues,

and we will continue to partner with business and continue to help create those new jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberal and Conservative plan to keep generating more and more dead money with no-strings-attached giveaways isn't working. It's why Ontario continues to lag the rest of Canada when it comes to job creation. It's time to take a smarter approach, one that we see working elsewhere. Is the Premier ready to admit that giveaways aren't working and it's time to reward job creators with job creation tax credits?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the leader of the third party knows, there are many businesses with whom we have partnered who are creating new jobs. This is an issue of retaining jobs and helping businesses to expand and create new jobs. As I said, 100,000 new jobs have been created in the last year.

We've reformed our tax system and made it one of the most competitive in North America; in fact, we have done very well when you look at other jurisdictions in terms of regaining jobs lost since the economic downturn. We're partnering with businesses through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, and we are making progress on those fronts.

I look forward to the opportunity to hear more from the leader of the third party, but we are on track. Businesses are coming to the province, and we are recovering from the economic downturn.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When Heinz pulled up stakes from Leamington, they went to a jurisdiction with job-creator tax credits. A job-creator tax credit ensures that we are rewarding the companies that are creating the jobs. When a company creates a job, they get a tax credit. When they invest in training their workers, they get a tax credit. When they invest in infrastructure for this province, here in Ontario, they get a tax credit. When they invest, they get a tax credit. When they hire, they get a tax credit. When they train, they get a tax credit.

Will the Premier admit that her plan isn't doing the job, and that it's time to take a targeted-tax-credit approach to getting families working in Ontario again?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I agree with the leader of the third party that we need to work with business, that we need to partner with business. Unlike the Conservatives, who don't seem to think that working with business is what we need to do, I actually agree with the NDP that we do need to work with business, but I would suggest that the work that is being done right now is creating results.

If we look—I've talked about Cisco—at Ford in Oakville, and securing 2,800 jobs, we invested \$70.9 million, and that leveraged a \$700-million investment. At Toyota, we provided a grant of \$16.9 million, and that will create 400 new jobs. At Original Foods Ltd. in Dunnville, a grant of \$1.5 million will create 150 new jobs.

We are working with businesses. We are making investments, partnering with business. That is creating jobs, and the investments are tied to the creation of those jobs. I think that is a fundamental requirement of those investments that we make.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Steve Clark: Good morning. My question is for the Premier, in her capacity as Minister of Agriculture. Premier, I was proud on Saturday to stand with 400 people at the Kemptville agricultural college to take the first steps in building a new future at that campus. We had farmers, college alumni and members of the community.

At the meeting, Robert Jelly, who chaired the College Royal at Kemptville this year, expressed his profound disappointment that you've been essentially silent on this issue—and you're the Minister of Agriculture. When eastern Ontario's farmers and farm families needed their Minister of Agriculture to stand up for them, you weren't there for them. These colleges in Kemptville and Alfred are so important. We need an educational institution east of Guelph.

Minister, I'm asking you—members of our farm community want to hear from you—will you stand up for Kemptville and Alfred and reverse that decision?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will answer the first question, and then I know that the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities is going to want to comment on this, because it is an issue to do with the University of Guelph.

I want to just be clear that we are very interested in finding local solutions. The MPP for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has been working very hard, and a local solution has been found. A francophone college—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

1120

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. It's not helpful when things get barked back and forth when we're trying to get an answer and somebody is speaking even when I'm trying to say something.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell will come to order, and the next person that says anything.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand the significance of the program in Kemptville, and I want that pro-

gram to continue. The program is not being cancelled, Mr. Speaker.

The MPP, as I say, from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has worked to find local solutions. We are open to a local solution. The program is not being cancelled. It's a matter of making sure that the program is viable and working with the local community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: Premier, I've spoken to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I've spoken to your parliamentary assistant. Farm families and farmers in eastern Ontario want to hear from you.

If I'm to believe the Ottawa Citizen this morning, your parliamentary assistant, Mr. Crack, the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, essentially agreed with me. He was quoted in the paper today. He was at that meeting yesterday. We got over 400 people—I've got 5,000 people that have signed the online petition standing up for these agricultural colleges. We need a viable and strong agricultural sector, and we need to be able to teach innovation at an agricultural college close to home.

Minister, are you going to stand up, agree with those 400 people and the 5,000-odd farmers, put a moratorium on it and support the college? Don't dismantle Kemptville and Alfred. Stand up. You're the Minister of Agriculture—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, I understand that we need to have this program. That's why the program is not being cancelled, Mr. Speaker. The program is not being cancelled. I just want to be very clear. I know, as the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has said, this is not a partisan issue. We want this training and this education process to go forward. It is not being cancelled.

We are open to a local solution. The MPP for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has been working, looking for local solutions. I ask the member opposite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order. The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry will come to order. The member from Oxford will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know it was a male voice.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The University of Guelph is an autonomous organization that has the authority to make these decisions. But I would ask the member opposite to work with us to look for a local solution. We are not cancelling the program. We want a viable solution, and I hope that the member opposite will work with us to find that local solution, Mr. Speaker.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Paul Miller: Before I go to the minister, I'd like to congratulate all of the winter Paralympic athletes on their huge successes in Sochi.

Speaker, to the minister responsible for the Pan/Parapan Am Games: For the millions of businesses, locals and athletes participating in the games and living in the GTHA, the expectation of a 20% reduction in vehicle traffic and a temporary implementation of HOV lanes from Oshawa to Hamilton is unreasonable, in cities that already suffer from horrendous gridlock, gridlock that even the Premier agrees already costs the local economy \$6 billion.

Speaker, how can local residents and businesses be confident that this government even has a transportation plan, when the minister seems unable to provide any details?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. Another day, another drive-by shooting of the Pan Am Games by the member opposite. The fear mongering tactics and negativity are not good for the games. It dampens the morale of our competitors. It takes away 26,000 jobs. It hurts our trading relationship with nations of the Americas. It hurts Ontario's and Canada's reputations.

Last week, we presented a workable, achievable transportation plan. The member opposite acknowledged that he has no plan. His allegations are unfounded. It only muddies the water, and he has no credibility.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: That's quite an interesting response.

Speaker, transportation and security are two extremely important factors to the success of this Pan/Parapan Am Games, but it appears the government is more interested in creating chaos than thoughtful, detailed plans. No details, no plan means chaos at these games. At the rate this is going, these games will be known as the "Panam-demonium games."

What is it going to take to get the government to create and reveal workable transportation and security plans for the 2015 Pan/Parapan Am Games? There's no plan. Let's hear about it.

Hon. Michael Chan: At the technical briefing last week, we were delighted to announce the TO2015 forecasted budget decrease from \$1.441 billion to \$1.392 billion, a savings of \$49 million.

Speaker, we have a comprehensive transportation plan. It is the work of more than 30 transportation partners led by the Ministry of Transportation. They are the experts. The plan includes best practices of past games in Vancouver and in London. It is workable; it is achievable.

I'm glad that the member opposite came to the technical briefing this time; unfortunately, it appears that he did not pay attention at all. The member opposite has no plan, only unfounded allegations. He's badmouthing the games all the time.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Yes, Speaker, it's true, last week the University of Guelph did make an announcement that they were going to be closing the Alfred campus in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and also the Kemptville campus in Leeds–Grenville. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, as a member for the rural riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, I got to work immediately on this file and I found this decision very troubling as well.

Working with the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, we came up with a solution that looks like it's going to be moving forward in Alfred and we're doing the same thing to have educational and research opportunities continue at the Kemptville campus. I can tell you that I am very, very proud to stand up—although the opposition will pretend to be the champions of agriculture, we have done our job on this side of the House. I ask—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Time is up. Be seated, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not a partisan issue, eh?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The House will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll say it again.

Interjection: It's not a laughing matter at all.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Some people are pushing pretty hard and I think I'll have to push back.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: They may be laughing in Cornwall, but—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Including you.

Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I have to say that this has been a challenging issue in the member's riding and in eastern Ontario. I want to commend the member for his proactive advocacy and for stepping up to make something happen to help save the Alfred campus.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a partisan issue. As the Premier said, this is a decision made by the University of Guelph, which is within their jurisdiction to make. But this member, on catching wind of this decision, stepped up, picked up some partners in La Cité and le Collège Boréal, who have signed an agreement in principle to move forward and ensure that those programs continue at Campus d'Alfred.

I want to commend the member for his efforts and I want to assure the member, because I know he's working hard on the Kemptville situation, that we're open to solutions there, and he'll work with his colleagues on the other side of the aisle. He'll work with whoever he has to work with to try to find a solution for Kemptville as well.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Supplementary.

1130

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for that very comprehensive answer as to the work that we've done in the last week on this side of the House.

Finding a community-based solution for Alfred campus in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell was a priority for me. At the same time, it was a priority for me to continue to make sure that agriculture and research education continues at Kemptville college. I will continue to work on behalf of my constituents and the agricultural community across this great province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, in my riding, 70% of the population is francophone. The minister has alluded to the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North, come to order.

Mr. Grant Crack: —in reaching an agreement and partnership with Collège Boréal and La Cité. I can tell you that francophone students across this province do have challenges in getting their post-secondary education.

Minister, could you please explain to us what we're doing as a government to ensure that francophones have the same opportunity as everyone else in this province to get their education?

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm not sure what the heckling is about. This is a very non-partisan question. It's about francophone students and their ability to experience their aspirations here in the province of Ontario, a responsibility that each and every one of us should take very seriously—and we do, because we're improving access for francophone students to get access to French-language programs here in Ontario.

This year, we've invested \$84 million in French-language post-secondary education. This represents a 62% increase in funding for francophone programming since 2003.

Last fall, we provided \$2 million to Glendon College, Collège Boréal and La Cité, to expand their programs and services in high-needs areas, with the opportunity to partner with other institutions across this province.

Mr. Speaker, this is important to francophone students. It's important that this government continues to stand up for those institutions and those students, unlike the party opposite, who, in the last platform, considered La Cité and Boréal investments to be a waste—far from it. These institutions are playing a very important role in our post-secondary—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. This morning, we revealed internal Liberal documents that prove you're telling the public one thing while the complete opposite is factual. You stood in this Legisla-

ture and told us repeatedly that you'll balance the budget by—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Are your pants on fire?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: In fact, in the May budget document that you displayed earlier, you said that you're on track to balance. Yet in newly discovered, confidential documents, you were told last March that you're not on track to meet the budget deficit. You knew this budget document was wrong, yet that's what you told the Legislature, the bond rating agencies and the public. You had a chance to come clean with the financial community.

What else are you hiding, Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, it took these individuals six months to get to page 2 of the financial and economic update, and they're now asking questions about something that we put out over a year ago that spoke very specifically and clearly about how we're recalibrating our spending in order to meet our targets.

We are on track, and we will stay on track, notwithstanding the challenges that we face—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order—last time.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the minister responsible for seniors will not be my armchair quarterback.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we have become the leanest government anywhere in Canada. We are the lowest per capita government because of the work we have done.

We've had some challenging times, and we made it very clear that our revenues are down by \$5 billion and, notwithstanding that, we're making those cuts as necessary, and we're making investments that are even more important.

Notwithstanding the fact that the federal government has cut funding only to Ontario, we will stand tall with the people of Ontario to meet those targets, with or without those individuals opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, on page 2 of that budget, you're stating a fact that only a month before you knew to be wrong. At the beginning of March last year, your government knew that you were \$3.6 billion off the mark. So what did you do? You went and cut a deal with the NDP to run the credit card bill up even higher, all the way to what is now known to be—from your secret documents—a \$4.5-billion gap in the budget. The documents say it clearly: "Cabinet retreat outcomes, increase the fiscal gap."

It's clear that you had your deficit-widening deal with the third party already in place last March, and it's very clear that you have absolutely no plan to balance the budget.

So, Premier, what fees and taxes do you have secretly cooked up to bring us back to balance, and is this budget deal with the NDP already done, like it was last year at this time?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we have a plan that speaks to investing in the people of this province. We have a plan for strategic investments and modern infrastructure to create employment. That's why we've had over 600,000 net new jobs since 2003.

The individuals opposite are only playing gimmicks. They're just talking about cuts across the board. Nowhere do they talk about how they're going to invest and stimulate economic growth.

We have made a number of programs to reduce taxes, to maintain a dynamic business climate to attract investment into our province. They are the job creators. That is who we stand with. They have chosen not to support business. We will. We'll support families as well to make sure it's fair to all concerned. It's a balanced approach that's going to ensure economic recovery and more prosperity for all Ontarians.

NATURAL GAS RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Ontario families reacted with concern to news that natural gas companies are applying for rate increases of up to 40%. What is this government going to do to ensure that hard-pressed Ontarians are protected from unfair energy price increases that they just can't afford?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Across North America, this winter has been one of the coldest in the last 25 years. The severe weather we've experienced has caused demand for natural gas and electricity to increase by as much as 25%. The increased demand has caused natural gas prices to rise all across North America.

In Ontario, natural gas utilities pass the cost of natural gas to consumers without any markup. They do not make a profit on the commodity cost of natural gas but on their own distribution rate.

The Ontario Energy Board, as part of its mandate to protect ratepayers, reviews these rates every three months to make sure they accurately reflect the cost of delivering natural gas to consumers. No increases have been approved. It's before the Ontario Energy Board. Let them do their job.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Premier, people understand it was a cold winter. Everyone knows that. But for families being squeezed, the news of natural gas getting more

expensive is very hard to take. Can the government ensure that these rates will be reviewed in a way that is fair, open and transparent, and will they allow families worried about the costs to have their say?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have confidence in the Ontario Energy Board. They listen to submissions from the public, from ratepayers groups. They listen to the industry when they make their decisions. It's fair, open and transparent.

But I have a question for the critic from the NDP: What is his suggestion to reduce gas rates in Ontario? Please tell the people of Ontario how you would do it.

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, the Honourable Deb Matthews.

On behalf of all members of the Legislature, I would also like to welcome the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario to the Legislature. Their presence is especially appropriate as we have reached another 10-year milestone this weekend. It's been 10 years since our government established Ontario's first family health teams. I'm pleased to report that FHTs have been making a positive, multidisciplinary impact not only across Ontario but within my own riding of Etobicoke North. Patients report significant benefits from having access to select health care practitioners all at the same location and with an internal referral system.

Beyond my own riding, I respectfully ask you to share some of your insights on the broader accomplishments and contributions of family health teams across Ontario.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke North for this question. I want to say thank you to the representatives from the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario who are here with us today. I want to say thank you to the dedicated nurses, the doctors, the dietitians, the pharmacists—all of the other health providers who are working in our family health teams. We now have over 200 family health teams, and Ontarians benefit from their skills, hard work and compassion every single day.

In just 10 years, we've gone from zero family health teams to 200 family health teams. That means more than 1,800 interdisciplinary health professionals are working side by side with over 2,400 physicians in our family health teams. It's a team-based model, and it provides improved coordination and collaboration so that patients get the care they need.

1140

Three million Ontarians are benefiting from family health teams, including 700,000 who previously did not have a family doctor. This is progress in 10 years, and we say thank you to the family health teams.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Thank you, Minister, for the insights, your review and your dedication to this file.

It has been said that medicine is the most scientific art and the most artistic science. I think family health teams particularly embody this, mixing the right amount of evidence-based science with the right amount of delivery, care and the humane approach—indeed, the art of medicine.

My own constituents in Etobicoke North benefit from the Canes Family Health Team and the Etobicoke Medical Centre Family Health Team. I was there for the ribbon-cutting at the opening, and now we're serving 30,000 patients. So in your presence, Minister, in Parliament, I would also like to thank them. Yet there are still some people across Ontario without a family doctor—clearly, as you know, the best kind of doctor. Minister, I ask you, how are we increasing access to primary care across Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I must say that primary care providers really are the entryway into Ontario's excellent health care system. Not only do they provide care when Ontarians need it most, but they have an important role to play in health promotion and illness prevention to keep people out of our emergency departments.

I'm pleased to say that 2.1 million more Ontarians now have a family doctor than in 2003, but there is still more to do. That's why we're training more doctors at home. We're recruiting more from abroad. We now have 5,000 more doctors working in Ontario than just a decade ago.

HealthForceOntario and initiatives like the Northern and Rural Recruitment and Retention Initiative ensure that those doctors are going where they're needed, and Health Care Connect helps patients who don't have a family doctor find one. I remain committed to increasing access to excellent and timely primary care.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. When the House wasn't in session last week, she snuck through two expensive political appointments to chair Ontario Power Generation as well as the disgraced Hydro One.

After the \$1.1-billion gas plant scandal, the Premier promised Ontarians that she would take the politics out of the energy sector. Now we see that her former leadership rival Sandra Pupatello is going to chair the disgraced Hydro One. She apparently passed up the opportunity to be Ontario's finance minister, but she has no energy sector experience, with the exception of allegedly gang-tackling the former Minister of Energy George Smitherman over the Samsung agreement at a cabinet meeting. Now we understand that Ms. Pupatello is set to make \$150,000 a year, or \$3,800 an hour, based on last year's board schedule.

The question is: Who gets to pay for it? We all know that it's Hydro One consumers. Will the Premier share with us what the Premier has signed off on a severance payment to Ms. Pupatello?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We take the management of Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One very seriously. We have taken great care in replacing the two chairs of those two organizations. Both existing chairs have been in office for somewhere around 10 years. We explored all the possibilities, and quite frankly, with her experience in government, in cabinet, she has as much experience as anybody else in the sector. But most importantly, she is very, very clearly going to work towards making Hydro One more customer-oriented. She has experience doing that. She is currently the CEO of the economic development corporation of Windsor and has other senior corporate positions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I find it passing strange that the Premier would pass that to the Minister of Energy, who was one of Sandra Pupatello's biggest boosters during the leadership. The Pupatello appointment is just another bad energy decision by this government.

Her severance, when it comes up, will be just another long item on a very long bill for folks who are paying Hydro One. We are continuing to pay for the Liberals' mistakes, whether it is the \$20 billion that the minister brags about to communicate 1.1% of energy on our grid through the FIT program, or the \$1.1-billion cancelled gas plants to save the finance minister's seat.

We have two out-of-control agencies at OPG and at Hydro One. They continue to produce inefficiencies and incompetencies by the second. Propane and natural gas are going to be at all-time highs, and people in Ontario are going to be forced between paying for their heat and hydro or their grocery bill.

The Liberal energy plan has failed. Will Kathleen Wynne stand in her place today and adopt Tim Hudak's plan for affordable energy in the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Another reminder that we do not use first names here; we use titles or responsibilities. I'd appreciate you adhering to that—even when you're making comments sitting in your seat, which you're not supposed to do in the first place.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, I mentioned that we made two appointments at the same time. One was to Ontario Power Generation: Mr. Bernard Lord, former Premier of the province of New Brunswick, who comes to the job with absolutely perfect credentials, having experience in the electricity sector as Premier and having had to manage those very, very important files. It's a credit to us that we've been able to attract Mr. Lord.

With respect to Hydro One, Hydro One is recognized by its peers across North America as one of the top five distribution companies on the continent. In addition to that, they have almost totally rebuilt and made more credible our transmission system in the last 10 years—a transmission system which that government let deteriorate so that we were having outages and brown-outs every single day somewhere in the province.

We're proud of both of our institutions.

BLOOD AND PLASMA DONATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. For the past year, New Democrats and public health advocates were urging this government to take action to prevent paid plasma clinics from opening in Ontario. This advice was completely ignored by the Liberal government, and last week, the first paid plasma clinic announced that they were opening their doors; tomorrow is the grand opening. Only then did we hear that the minister was going to take action.

My question is simple: Why did it take her so long?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am very pleased that I will be introducing legislation that will make it illegal to pay for blood, just as it is currently illegal to pay for organs or sperm or eggs. That's a pretty foundational principle, and it was recommended by the Krever commission that we have a volunteer-driven blood and plasma collection system.

We are moving forward with both regulation and legislation. I'm assuming the member opposite, by the question, will support the speedy passage of this legislation. I think it is important to note that Health Canada, unfortunately, said that it was up to provinces to make this decision, province by province, rather than having a national strategy. Once they made that announcement—that's why we're moving forward now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I really can't understand why the minister would wait until Canadian Plasma Resources had signed the lease, made leasehold improvements, recruited their staff, set up their clinic, set up their donors and opened their doors to finally decide to make a peep about it and close them down.

Is it just me who thinks that there may be legal action because of this tardy decision? Who will pay for those legal actions? Will the minister at least admit that she was mistaken in not taking action sooner?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I cannot speak for the business decisions of a company that had no licence to operate in Ontario or in Canada. That was a decision that that company made.

What I'm telling you, Speaker, is that we believe that a licence is required from the provincial government. They do not believe that. Rather than having this embroiled in the courts, we are moving forward with both regulation and legislation to ensure that the principle of voluntary donation remains intact.

It's a principled decision. It is absolutely the right decision. I'm delighted the NDP will support it, and I'm hoping that the Progressive Conservatives will, too.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of the Environment. As you'll know, Speaker, this is Canada Water Week. It's a national celebration of our nation's most vital resource.

This week culminates with World Water Day this Saturday, March 22. Here in Ontario, we have the privilege of being the caretakers of the largest supplies of fresh water in the entire world. For the people of this province, the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River basin are vitally important for a high quality of life and their continued prosperity. They supply our drinking water, power our towns and cities, irrigate our farms, fill our fishing nets and provide hours of recreation, relaxation and spiritual sustenance for Ontario families, and bring business to this province as well. The magnificent lakes and the rivers and streams that feed them are one of the great economic advantages we have in Ontario.

Speaker, through you, could the minister provide the House with information on what the government is doing to help our communities protect our Great Lakes?

1150

Hon. James J. Bradley: A very timely question. Our government understands the importance of maintaining a healthy Great Lakes ecosystem right here in the province of Ontario. One small but effective step that we have taken is establishing the Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund. This program offers modest grants to grassroots community groups for activities such as cleaning up a beach or shoreline, restoring a wetland or planting trees to stop stream bank erosion. For example, we funded local groups' projects to improve fish habitat, wildlife habitat and water quality in George Creek and Fourteen Mile Creek, flowing into Lake Superior and Lake Ontario respectively. In fact, we launched this program two years ago, and since we've done so, we've awarded more than \$3 million to 156 groups to make improvements in their corner of the Great Lakes. Actions like these in communities across Ontario add up, and that's why, last week, we invited non-profit groups seeking funding for the Great Lakes projects to make their applications.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question again for the Minister of the Environment. I agree, we shouldn't take the Great Lakes for granted. But when I speak to my constituents about water, they're often speaking about the drinking water that comes out of their tap. Municipal and provincial governments have spent literally billions of dollars building drinking water treatment plants, training people to operate those plants and making sure that the water that comes out of those plants is safe to drink. Safe drinking water in this province requires both substantial and adequate funding and persistent vigilance. Speaker, through you, could the minister provide the House with information on what our government is doing to make sure that the drinking water that comes out of our taps is not only safe for us today but will also be safe for future generations?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Again, a very timely question. Some in this House will remember what happened when the province let its guard down on drinking water protection. Budgets were being slashed willy-nilly. Drinking water inspectors were fired to save money. Well, money was saved, but lives were lost. Seven people

died. Thousands were sickened. Walkerton proved that there is nothing as precious as clean, safe drinking water. I am pleased to champion the clean drinking water law and regulations that were implemented in response to the Walkerton tragedy. Some people in this House may not agree, but I think it's exceedingly important that all of us in this House remember the bitter lessons of the Walkerton drinking water tragedy. I hope that no member of this House will ever forget that. It had tragic consequences for everyone. We brought in rules, regulations, policies and laws to ensure that this will never happen again.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Premier. Premier, last week, a group of Ontario standardbred horse breeders filed a statement of claim against OLG and the province. The lawsuit states that the cancellation of SARP was made with no prior consultations or offer of compensation. It's true, and it's what we've been saying all along. Your government's conduct towards the industry is inexcusable. The NDP's indifference, by allowing the 2012 budget to pass, is inexcusable. I ask the Premier, why should it take a lawsuit to force you and the NDP to pay attention?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I cannot speak to an ongoing legal situation, and I won't do that, but I can say to the member opposite that my record on the horse racing industry is very, very successful. The Alliance circuit—and this is eight tracks. Woodbine, Mohawk, Flamboro Downs, Georgian Downs, Western Fair, Clinton, Hanover, Grand River all have funding plans. They all have a strategy in place and a funding plan in place. Fort Erie has a funding plan. Rideau Carleton—there is conversation ongoing. Ajax has a funding plan, and Sudbury, Kawartha, Dresden, Hiawatha and Leamington are still in negotiation. We are very pleased at the progress that we've made. I've made it clear that the integration of horse racing with the gaming industry is what needs to happen. That is under way, Mr. Speaker, and those tracks will have a 2014 season. That's a success.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Well, Speaker, I've spoken to leaders in the industry, and they tell me the Premier's spin is completely at odds with reality. It's not up to the courts to sort this out; it's up to you, because you and the NDP made the mess. You need to clean it up. We have called for an immediate and permanent end to your so-called modernization plan that would build 29 new casinos while putting even more of the horse racing industry out of business. We would also re-establish a workable, transparent and affordable Slots at Racetracks Program. Why won't you—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The opposition is advocating for a return to a program that was not transparent,

that was not working, and I think he knows perfectly well that John Snobelen, Elmer Buchanan and John Wilkinson worked to put together a plan that would be transparent, that would focus on the industry and would allow for the integration of gaming and the horse racing industry. So as I said, the eight tracks in the Alliance circuit all have a plan for going forward. We're still in negotiation with some of the other tracks, but I'm very confident that the \$400 million over the next five years that we are investing in horse racing is going to allow the horse racing industry in Ontario to thrive and will not, as the opposition would suggest, return us to a non-transparent and unaccountable plan.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Last week agriculture in eastern Ontario was dealt a body blow with the decision to close Kemptville and Alfred agriculture college. Agriculture education should be hands-on and site-specific, because the process for learning—to learn agriculture, you learn it where you grew up, and a lot of those students are still going home to their family farm. But something else—farm folks, they understand hard budgetary decisions. But what they need is a chance to be able to help determine their future. Premier, you're the one person in this province who has the power to give those people a chance to see if they can save their college. You have the power. Will you use it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: As was responded to in previous questions, the power to respond to this local challenge is found in the hands of the local people in those communities and the local members like the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, who stepped up and got some local partners in Collège Boréal and La Cité Collégiale to help ensure that those students at the Alfred campus can continue to get the francophone agricultural courses that they want to pursue. I've reached out to the member for Leeds-Grenville as well, to say we can work with this on a non-partisan basis. What we do need are local stakeholders to step up and provide this programming or find a way to do it. We're open to those solutions. So we're happy to work with the member opposite, should he have some solutions to put forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. This is a question for the Minister of Agriculture and Food, and we need more than a fair-weather minister. We need more than a minister who's just going to make great announcements when agriculture is happy. Right now this area is in a crisis. They're not asking for a bailout. They're demanding a chance to come up with a plan, and they weren't given that chance. Why don't you talk to the people before these announcements—and, yes, the Minister of Agriculture can have an impact on this question.

1200

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member opposite would be a lot more helpful if he were to get off his soapbox, get to work and see if he can work with us to find local solutions to this local problem.

It's very important to say this: There is not a loss of programming here in the agricultural sector. The programming is moving to another location because, in the interests of the University of Guelph, they've determined that that's what's best for their students and that's what's best for the growth of the program.

At the same time, we recognize the local challenges that this creates. That's why we're working very closely with the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, and we'll work with the member for Leeds—Grenville, other members and other community leaders to see if there's a similar solution available for the Kemptville campus.

We want to be constructive. We want to make sure that we're doing the best that we can to ensure that the agricultural community is well served.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In light of passage of Bill 156, An Act to proclaim the month of January Tamil Heritage Month, I draw the members' attention to the fact that the opposition day motion designated for this afternoon is identically worded and affects sections of Bill 156.

Standing order 52 provides that "no motion, or amendment, the subject-matter of which has been decided upon, can be again proposed during the same session." I must therefore rule that the motion designated opposition day number 2 is now out of order and may not be proceeded with.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Leeds—Grenville has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Agriculture and Food concerning the closure of the Kemptville and Alfred agricultural colleges. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Perth—Wellington has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Agriculture and Food concerning the horse racing industry. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition on a point of order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker; I appreciate your indulgence. I just want to introduce to members of the assembly the bilingual political science class joining us from Glendon College at York University. They are

here, good or ill, to see democracy in action today. I want to welcome the students and wish them all the best.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: A point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, if I could.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: A point of order; sorry.

Mr. Speaker, the government of the day continues to talk about working in partnership. I wonder why today they're out glad-handing in my riding, handing out—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I stand—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll wait.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I stand; you sit. Thank you.

The Attorney General on a point of order.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Is it in order to ask for a late show before the answer has been given by a minister?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A process is in place, and it was appointed properly.

The member from Barrie on a point of order.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Earlier, the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games referred to comments made by myself and the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek as "drive-by shootings." I believe this to be highly unparliamentary and very inappropriate. It's my hope that the minister will apologize and withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While we do not condone any kind of language that would inflame, there were no specific references made to individuals. I would also caution all of us against using any kind of language that would inflame. Finding—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll wait while I try to respond.

I find that each of us needs to reflect inside or maybe look in the mirror and ask ourselves whether we are being parliamentary.

The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I just wonder if we could take a moment to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. I wish everybody a happy St. Patrick's Day. Maybe we could just honour it with the spirit of a bit of beer and a bit of fun. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I wish everyone the best today. There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1205 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GEOFF STEVENS

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise to pay respect to a popular musician and larger-than-life resident of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Geoff Stevens passed away in his home on Tuesday, January 14, 2014, at the age of 48, almost four years to the day he was diagnosed with cancer.

A talented and lifelong musician and performer, music and family were his life. Geoff first played in his dad's Brantford area country band at age 16. After moving to the Grey-Bruce area in his twenties, Geoff formed the band Outskirts, then toured with Stone Road before returning home as the Geoff Stevens Band. The Geoff Stevens Band would become one of the most popular in our community, playing sold-out shows everywhere they performed, including the annual, and very popular, Salmon Spectacular Fishing Derby.

"It wasn't ever about Geoff; it was about giving the people a good time," shared a treasured friend and fellow musician, Brian Tannahill. "He never claimed to be a virtuoso guitar player or an amazing fiddle player, but he could entertain and work a crowd like nobody else."

Always ones to seize the day, Geoff and Brian in 2010 co-wrote a song, Gonna Find a Cure. Geoff wanted to sing about living with cancer, but more so about how staying positive was to a degree a part of his healing. He really believed his attitude made a big difference in his life, and it showed while he was performing and while he was suffering. "You can't control what happens to you, you can only control what you do with it, right? I can't control what the cancer's going to do, but I can control what I'm going to do while I've got it," was Geoff's mantra.

I encourage everyone to check out Gonna Find a Cure on YouTube, and if so inclined, donate in support Geoff and his wish to find a cure for cancer.

Geoff was also a gifted craftsman whose one-of-a-kind kitchen cabinets adorn homes throughout the Bruce-Grey area. His wife, Sherrie, said his big source of pride was the maple syrup cabin he built in the family's bush. When they found out before Christmas Geoff had only weeks to live, friends and acquaintances rallied together to finish the cabin so they could spend Christmas Eve there. This was a special day and a lasting tribute to a wonderful husband, father and friend.

Geoff also enjoyed the outdoors and ATVing. He was a proud family man who enjoyed watching his daughter, Madison, highland dance, and son, Mitchell, play hockey. "That was a big part of our family life," said Sherrie. "He was a pretty proud father that way."

Jeff Farmer, one of his best friends, said people gravitated towards Geoff because of his energy and passion for life. "You could never be unhappy around him because he just would not allow it," said Farmer.

I would like the House to join me in paying respect to Geoff Stevens for sharing his talents with so many and for showing great courage even in his darkest days.

Geoff left his legacy in this world through his contagious enthusiasm for life, even in times of ill health, his musical talents and his ability to make everyone happy. He was a fantastic entertainer, a wonderful family man and an inspiring person who taught all of us a great message: Live life to the fullest every day and do your best to make it the best it can be. I will always remember his smile and laughter and, of course, his music.

Geoff, you will be missed, my friend. However, please be assured that "the song will play on" for you and you will remain in our memories always.

CO-OP EDUCATION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, this week marks Co-operative Education Week in Canada. Education at Work Ontario, or EWO, is the provincial voice of post-secondary co-operative education and is celebrating National Co-op Week by presenting its annual Student of the Year awards. The awards recognize two outstanding co-op students, one from college and one from university, who have demonstrated exceptional job achievement, extra-curricular involvement, academic achievement and a strong contribution to co-operative education. On behalf of the NDP caucus and all members of this House, I offer our congratulations and thanks to this year's winners, Hargurdeep Singh from Sheridan College, and Massine Bouzerar from Brock University.

I also want to express our appreciation to the 40,000 Ontario students who participate in co-operative education programs at 37 colleges and universities. Co-op is a long-established and highly effective form of work-integrated learning that benefits not only students but Ontario's economy as a whole.

Students gain hands-on experience in their chosen field of study and opportunities to develop skills, explore career options and network with potential employers. Co-op employers benefit from the new ideas, fresh perspectives and enthusiasm that students bring to the workplace. Institutions can use feedback from co-op employers to improve the quality and relevance of program curriculum.

My private member's bill, to be introduced later today, will ensure that more Ontario students and employers can reap the benefits of Ontario's exemplary co-op programs and other high-quality work-integrated learning experiences.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize some of the outstanding leading women and girls in my community.

As the first Chinese Canadian woman elected to the Ontario Legislature, I'm very proud to celebrate how far we have come, proud to reflect on the women who pioneered the way for us, and proud to reaffirm our dedication as women to fight for a society that promotes

diversity, individuality and, most importantly, a world where women are treated as equals.

All women in this House have overcome barriers. They have also opened doors for future generations. Recently—as early as the 1980s—only eight women were elected here in the Legislature. Today, we have 25 women sitting as elected members in this House, including our first woman Premier. That's progress, Mr. Speaker.

In Scarborough—Agincourt, I continue to fight for the empowerment of women and girls in my riding. I'm pleased to announce that, this year, 11 young women and girls in Scarborough—Agincourt have won the Leading Women, Leading Girls, Building Communities Award. This award honours the many women and girls in our community who have worked to improve the lives of others. These award winners are Evaline Xavier, Shaumya Sivasuthan, Lee Soda, Vanaja Indirakumar, Eva Yeung, Jean Kennedy Campbell, Winnie Cho, Valerie Nelson, Sonia Siu, Naheed Khan and Felecia Wong. These women are true role models for young girls everywhere.

I want to thank these winners and all the women in our community for everything they do to advance the cause of gender equality worldwide.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My constituents tell me that the government's plan for Highway 7/8 still needs some work. I've met with people who live and work near the highway. Just last week I met with Agricultural Business Community representatives. I've met with ministry staff and I've attended public information centres. In December, I met with representatives of the county of Perth and the township of Perth East.

I followed up with the Minister of Transportation concerning a joint letter from the county of Perth, the city of Stratford and the townships of Perth East and Perth South. They raised some serious concerns about the latest plan for the highway; to name just a few: loss of prime agricultural land, inadequate attention to impacts on local agriculture, delayed emergency response times, emergency access issues, and added costs that could be downloaded to municipalities.

The four municipal partners together requested an independent peer review of the government's plan. I supported their request. It was a reasonable and constructive response to a plan that still does not reflect the needs of our area, despite the government's years of planning.

Our municipalities are showing leadership, demonstrating their desire to work together and contribute to a better solution. We need the Minister of Transportation to show that kind of leadership. In February, he dismissed their request for a peer review. Respectfully, I call on the minister to reconsider his decision and approve it.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Michael Mantha: Today I want to take the opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of organ and tissue donation and to tell you about a dear friend of mine, Kim Clouthier, whose life we just recently celebrated.

Kim received a double lung transplant a year and a half ago—a million-dollar gift, as Kim referred to it. This is a gift that we can all give.

There's a chronic shortage of organs and tissues available for transplant across Canada. The need for organs in this province outweighs their availability. Currently, there are over 1,500 people in this province waiting to receive life-saving organ transplants, and thousands more are waiting for life-enhancing tissue transplants. Unfortunately, so many people have died while waiting for transplants. Families are losing their children, their parents, their loved ones.

The Trillium Gift of Life Network works with hospitals and transplant centres and finds matches. They work from a waiting list and start with the most urgent. It's unfortunate that we have such a long waiting list and that people are dying when we all have the gift to save another person's life, like Kimmy's.

I encourage everyone here in this room to visit the website www.beadonor.ca and fill out the donor registration and consent form. You, too, could give the gift of life.

1310

Kim Clouthier received the gift of life through a lung donor, giving us more time with her. Kim gave me the gift of allowing me to be part of her family, having her mom and dad and family members accept me as one of their own. Kim welcomed me into her circle of friends, but the best part was her friendship.

I want to thank her donor for allowing us more time with her. I want to thank all donors for giving us the gift of life. And I want to encourage everyone here listening to please sign your donor cards.

CELINE TOWER

Mr. John Fraser: I'm pleased to stand today to pay tribute to my friend Celine Tower, who passed away on March 7, in Colombo, Sri Lanka, while visiting her homeland.

Celine dedicated her life to serving her community. She was a board member at the Heron Emergency Food Centre, volunteered at the cancer centre and the Ottawa Hospital, delivered Meals on Wheels, and collected donations for many charitable and health foundations.

I had the honour to work with Celine for many years while she diligently served for over 30 years as the editor of *Vistas*, a long-standing not-for-profit community newspaper that helps keep our community together. You could always count on Celine to speak her mind, and she was a kind and generous person.

Celine was one of the most determined and purposeful people I have ever met. As an appreciated member of our community, Celine received many awards for her volunteer work. Most recently, she was honoured with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal.

To her husband, Courtney, her children, Amanda and Courtney, her granddaughter, Samara, and her sister, Therese Ferdinand, and to all her extended family and friends, on behalf of our community, I would like to express our deepest condolences and sympathy. We will all miss her.

CLARA HUGHES

Mr. Michael Harris: This past Friday, March 14, Clara Hughes started her Big Ride across Canada to help grow awareness, acceptance and action towards a stigma-free society for those who have a mental illness.

As part of the Bell Let's Talk campaign, Clara is cycling over 12,000 kilometres and visiting 95 communities across this country. Her goal is to create a conversation about mental health and to help benefit local programs in towns and cities throughout Canada.

As you might already know, Clara is a six-time Canadian Olympic speed skating and cycling medallist, but her other greatest accomplishment was overcoming depression. Like Clara, many Canadians struggle with mental illness. As many as one in five people will suffer with a mental illness in their lifetime, according to the Canadian Mental Health Association. That means each one of us has been challenged by this illness directly or indirectly, whether it be depression, anxiety, bipolar, schizophrenia or a personality disorder. Whether you are struggling with an illness yourself or being affected by it through a friend, family member or co-worker, it's important that we educate ourselves about these illnesses and have an open mind about overcoming them. Clara also demonstrates that having an active lifestyle is important to keeping us mentally healthy.

She will be hosting events like the Journey of Hope party at Bingemans in Kitchener this Thursday, and visiting schools, like Kitchener-Waterloo Collegiate Friday morning.

Speaker, I encourage everyone to go online to clarasbigride.bell.ca to find out when she will be riding through your community.

ORDRE DE LA PLÉIADE

M. Phil McNeely: L'Ordre de la francophonie et du dialogue des cultures reconnaît chaque année six ontariennes ou ontariens pour s'être démarqués de façon exceptionnelle par leur contribution à faire rayonner la langue française. Cette distinction marque ainsi les efforts et l'apport indéniables de ces individus à la promotion de la culture française dans leur communauté respective mais aussi au niveau de la francophonie partout en Ontario.

Nous célébrons d'ailleurs aujourd'hui cette reconnaissance à la francophonie lors d'une cérémonie en après-midi en présence de l'honorable David C. Onley, lieutenant-gouverneur de l'Ontario.

Je tenais à féliciter tout particulièrement devant cette chambre M^{me} Nicole Fortier d'Orléans, qui recevra la médaille de l'Ordre de la Pléiade cet après-midi. Elle est présidente de la Société franco-ontarienne du patrimoine et de l'histoire d'Orléans et a été instrumentale à l'organisation des activités commémorant le passage de Champlain aux abords de l'Île Petrie, il y a 400 ans de cela.

Félicitations une fois de plus aux six récipiendaires de cette année : Nicole Fortier, d'Orléans; Elaine Legault, de Bowmanville; Ronald Marion, de Welland; Germaine Paquette, d'Azilda; Paul-François Sylvestre, de Toronto; Denis B. Vaillancourt, de Rockland. Vous êtes des symboles pour les générations qui suivent.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise on behalf of the more than 5,000 people who have signed my petition to save the Kemptville and Alfred agricultural colleges.

I'm also representing the 400 people who attended an emergency meeting Saturday in Kemptville, organized by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. They all understand that continuing these specialized agricultural educational programs is critical to the future success of eastern Ontario's farming and agri-food sectors in an increasingly competitive world economy.

The University of Guelph's short-sighted decision to close these campuses left Ontario without agricultural education east of Guelph. This is unacceptable. That's why I immediately asked the Premier and Minister of Agriculture to work with us and develop a plan to save these colleges. I was very disheartened by her refusal today to grant my request for a two-year moratorium on these closures. A moratorium is essential, and it's the first step to give us the time to develop a business plan for the future of these campuses. It's unacceptable to hear the Minister of Agriculture say, "Don't worry, the programs will continue somewhere else." We must maintain them in eastern Ontario, and I have every confidence we can build a plan to do that if we have the time.

So I'm taking the Premier at her word to work cooperatively, by calling on her now to come to Kemptville with me. Let's meet the committee formed at Saturday's emergency OFA meeting, and you can hear for yourself why there is so much widespread support for that moratorium.

EVENTS IN SRI LANKA

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of the third party on a point of order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: As the Tamil Heritage Month motion has passed this morning, and as we are joined here by a number of Tamil Canadians who have lost their

family members, friends and relatives in the war in their homeland, I seek unanimous consent that the House observe a moment of silence to pay respect and to remember the thousands upon thousands of Tamils who lost their lives in the decades of violence, which continues in Sri Lanka.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of the third party is seeking unanimous consent for all of us to stand in a moment of silence, in respect and honour of the Tamil community. Do we agree? Agreed.

I would ask all members in the House to stand—including our guests—to observe a moment of silence for the request.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of New Democrats and particularly the leader of the New Democratic Party, Andrea Horwath, we would like to acknowledge the groups that made the Tamil Heritage Month possible, and I acknowledge them here today. The groups are: Arivakam Canada, the Association of Canadian Tamil Poets, the Brampton Tamil Association, the Canadian Tamil Academy, the Canadian Hindu priest association, the Canadian Tamil Alumni Association, the Canadian Tamil Congress, the Canadian Tamils Sports Association, the Canadian Tamil Women's Development Organization, the Canadian Tamil Youth Alliance, Cedarwood Tamil Community Association Ratepayers, the Centre for Canadian Tamils, the Durham Tamil Association, the Markham Tamil Organization, the Mississauga Tamil Association, the National Council of Canadian Tamils, Ottawa Muthamil Kala Mantram, the Society for the Aid of Community Empowerment, the Tamil Creative Writers Association, the Tamil Cultural and Academic Society of Durham, the Tamil Eelam Society of Canada, the Tamil Information Centre, the Tamil Youth Organization–Canada, and Vasantham (Tamil Seniors Wellness Centre).

All of these groups made this possible, and I'd like to acknowledge them and thank them on behalf—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As the member would know, that's not a point of order, but my patience was not pressed. Thank you.

The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure on a point of order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, on an equally pressing point of order. On May 18 every year, I and several people of the Tamil Youth Alliance plant trees at a memorial site for Mullivaikal, which is that terrible day of slaughter. We've invited MPPs every year to come that we've been doing this; this will be the fifth year. I would just like, in the spirit of co-operation—because I think this has been one of the better moments in the House; I want to thank the other parties—to extend that invitation. We're trying to plant 40,000 trees over the next couple of years to remember everyone who was in-

volved. This is a non-partisan event; I would love to see all of you.

1320

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Again, not a point of order, but my patience was not pressed. I appreciate everyone's opportunities here.

It is now time for reports by committees.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I beg leave to present a report on pre-budget consultations, 2014, from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Briefly, as Chair of the committee, I'd like to thank all members of the committee from all three parties for the collegial approach they brought to the exercise of travelling around the province of Ontario, hearing from its citizens. In the report you will find three recommendations from the committee and two dissenting opinions, which makes sense from a three-party system, Speaker. My thanks to all who came out and all who involved themselves in this process. I would move adoption of the report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Flynn moves adjournment of the debate—I think that's what you said. Yes, adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LEARNING THROUGH WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'APPRENTISSAGE PAR L'EXPÉRIENCE EN MILIEU DE TRAVAIL

Ms. Sattler moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act to establish the Advisory Council on Work-Integrated Learning / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités pour créer le Conseil consultatif de l'apprentissage intégré au travail.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This bill amends the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act to create a provincial advisory council on work-integrated learning, also called WIL, composed of representatives from student groups in the post-secondary sector as well as from labour market and economic development organizations. The overall mandate of the council is to advise the minister on how to increase post-secondary work-integrated learning opportunities, particularly paid WIL.

The bill sets out specific criteria to define work-integrated learning, which can include co-ops, internships, field placements, practicums and more. The council is responsible for making recommendations in three key areas:

- how to increase employer awareness of the benefits of WIL and encourage more employers to participate;

- how to support institutions in delivering effective WIL and in maximizing the educational benefits for students; and

- how to ensure that students who are interested in participating in WIL are able to do so.

The council will also advise the minister on the development of a website to offer one-stop access for employers to find out about post-secondary programs that include a WIL component and the skills that students would bring to the workplace.

Finally, the bill requires the council to report annually on Ontario's progress with regard to work-integrated learning.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (KEEPING ONTARIO'S ROADS SAFE), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (ASSURER LA SÉCURITÉ DES ROUTES DE L'ONTARIO)

Mr. Murray moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 173, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters / Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne diverses questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'll make my comments under ministers' statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ROAD SAFETY

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's really indeed a great pleasure to stand to introduce this bill and to discuss it briefly. I'm going to start with a group of thank yous from some of my friends in the gallery and I'm going to conclude with some acknowledgment and thank yous to some of my colleagues here in the House, and I'll try to provide the meat of the bill in between those two things.

This has been a remarkable amount of work. Our roads right now in Ontario, as you know, are the safest in North America. Given how north we are, how vast and varied our geography is, that we have safer roads than California or Iowa or Georgia is really quite something. That is due to the vigilance of many folks in the community. I want to thank the Ontario Provincial Police for the role they played in this bill. The Canadian Auto Association is represented here today by Teresa Di Felice, Elliott Silverstein and Silvana Aceto. They have been remarkable, and their fingerprints very much are on this bill. They've been great teachers and mentors for me through this process. Also joining us are Share the Road Cycling Coalition's Howard Brown and Eleanor McMahon, who have, from personal tragedy and experience, driven a great deal of this. Remarkable and dear friends of the Ontario Trucking Association—we're joined today by its president and CEO, David Bradley. There's a great deal here on trucking. Much of this is work that the OTA has been trying to achieve for a long time, and I want to thank them.

As you know, I am an automobileless household and a cyclist, so it's particularly great for me that Jared Kolb from Cycle Toronto is here, and the larger cycling community that has worked as part of that—also the Ontario Medical Association's Katie MacKay, who is here. I also want to thank—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Let's hear it for the doctors.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The doctors absolutely have been a big part, and the coroner. Much of what's in this bill reflects the coroner. I'm going to come to my colleagues at the end, but I will take you through exactly what the bill purports to do if it enjoys the confidence of this House and my colleagues.

As I have mentioned, we have been ranked amongst the safest streets and highways in North America. This world-class performance is the result of our tough laws, strong enforcement and the work of many dedicated road safety partners. Keeping our roads safe for everyone—drivers, cyclists and pedestrians—is a top priority of this government and indeed, I think, all members of this Legislature. We recognize that despite Ontario's record of success, there is still more that the province can do to improve its road safety programs.

This is not a world of cyclists, drivers, pedestrians and transit riders. We are a world of people who move: to work, to school and back home to spend time with their

families. Those trips sometimes have our moms on bicycles, our dads in cars and our kids in wheelchairs or walking our sidewalks and crossing our busy intersections. It is our job to ensure that our roads are safe for all Ontarians, no matter what choice they make about how they move. I rise in the House today to introduce new legislation that, if passed, would keep Ontario a leader in road safety. Most importantly, this legislation would keep people who use our roads safer—drivers, cyclists and pedestrians alike.

Today, I am pleased to introduce our government's Keeping Ontario's Roads Safe Act, 2014. If passed, this legislation would reduce collisions, injuries and fatalities across Ontario while improving the safety of all road users. It would be one step in giving Ontarians healthier, more convenient and safer choices on how they choose to get around. The legislation, if passed, improves measures to address drivers who repeatedly drink and drive, by requiring them to complete intensive alcohol education, treatment and monitoring programs, building on the great success of our anti-drinking-and-driving laws. As well, for those who continue to use their cellphones while driving, this proposed legislation would see minimum fines increased as much as \$240 from the current penalty. Going forward, we plan to introduce three demerit points upon conviction. This legislation would also ensure that future regulations will allow us to accept recommendations from a broader range of health care practitioners through our mandatory medical reporting program.

1330

This legislation also looks at what we can do to improve road safety in order to keep pedestrians safe. The number of pedestrians killed has declined significantly over the last 25 years. However, pedestrians still, remarkably, represent about one in six of all motor-vehicle-related fatalities in Ontario, and 41% of these have occurred at intersections. In response to the coroner's office recommendations and municipal requests, this legislation, if passed, would require drivers to yield the whole roadway to pedestrians at school crossings and pedestrian crossovers. It would also support the use of new pedestrian crossing devices.

We know that there are other choices people make to get around. One in three commutes is less than five kilometres, a distance an adult could cycle in about 30 minutes. Cycling, walking and active transportation are the healthiest and least expensive solutions to congestion and could divert a huge amount of people out of cars. My motto has been, if you've noticed my weight loss, "burn fat, not fuel," because I burn off my body fat on my way to work rather than filling up my tank. That's why, last year, we released #CycleON, Ontario's 20-year strategy to become the most cycling-friendly jurisdiction in North America and achieve first place in cycling and active transportation tourism. This is very important to rural and small-town Ontario, who are providing leadership in this area.

If passed, this legislation would build on that strategy, increasing fines for motorists "dooring" cyclists. This

legislation would require motorists to keep a distance of at least one metre from their vehicles—and cyclists the same when passing motorists. This one-metre rule was one of the central recommendations of the coroner's report and was viewed as a critical measure to reduce fatalities on our roads. It would also support cycling on paved shoulders of unrestricted provincial highways and in contra-flow bicycle lanes in urban centres to give cyclists more choices on how and where to travel.

These changes and numerous others we're proposing all recognize that everyone needs to feel safe and protected on our roads and highways. Unsafe drivers and vehicles have no place on Ontario roads, and the people of Ontario deserve no less. Ontario is a North American leader in road safety, and we are committed to keeping it that way.

I would just like to pause before concluding, because this is maybe one of the most important things that I will say. This legislation builds off of four different private members' bills. We not only went through all the requests from stakeholders and from regular folks; we also went in this House, because I believe that we under-utilize our MPPs—our House is at its best and is most productive when it is least partisan.

I obviously want to thank my colleague MPP Balkissoon for his work on distracted driving. You see his private member's bill reflected in this bill. I want to give a shout-out to the MPP from Parkdale–High Park, whose leadership, advocacy and consistency on promoting bicycle safety and keeping proper distances between motorists and cyclists—she has recognized for a long time that this was a critical priority. You will see that in this bill, reflecting her work. Mr. Miller, the MPP for Parry Sound–Muskoka, has pointed out the obvious silliness that it is illegal for cyclists to ride on paved shoulders in this province, so we are reversing that and supporting the other measures in his bills to provide more cycling-friendly routes across Ontario. Finally, my friend and my former critic, who is one of the dearest people in this House, who always has a great sense of humour, the MPP for Simcoe North, has long advocated and worked with CAA to try and ensure that we could provide greater safety for tow trucks and other operators at roadside, in the same way we do for police. That very excellent work and his leadership are reflected in this bill, and I want to give him a big shout-out for his leadership.

We are partisan at elections, and I've always said, if we could be Ontarians first before we're Liberals or Conservatives or New Democrats or labour or business or community folks, if we actually are citizens and put people at the front of the line and do the people's business—I hope that all members will see this as their bill, not just the MPPs that I mentioned here or our friends in the gallery. This is this place at its best. This is the Legislature's bill. It is the people's bill. I want to thank all those MPPs who showed great vision in providing those private members' bills. This is an all-party bill, and I hope it will quickly gain the confidence of this House and reflect that.

I want to just thank MPPs Fife, Miller and Colle, my parliamentary assistant, for the non-partisan cycle in caucus and the great work the three of them are doing. They are exemplary leaders, and I hope they will work with us to see this stewarded through the House.

God bless and keep everyone safe.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's my privilege to rise in the chamber today to acknowledge World Consumer Rights Day, which occurred March 15, this past Sunday. This was first observed in 1983, and it has become an annual occasion for celebration and solidarity within the international consumer movement.

World Consumer Rights Day offers an opportunity to promote the basic rights of all consumers, to demand that those rights be respected and protected, and to expose marketplace abuses where they exist and social injustices that undermine those rights. I would suggest, too, that they also undermine our economy, Speaker.

I'm pleased to report that over the past year, our government has taken action on a number of reforms that benefit Ontarians through stronger rights and protections. These reforms fit well within the spirit of World Consumer Rights Day.

Among these initiatives is the Wireless Services Agreements Act that will take effect on April 1 of this year. This piece of legislation passed unanimously in this House on October 30, and received royal assent in November of last year. The Wireless Services Agreement Act affects about eight out of 10 Ontarians.

Coincidentally, the theme for this year's World Consumer Rights Day focuses on mobile phones, with the slogan, "Fix Our Phone Rights." That's exactly what our new legislation does, Speaker. It protects wireless consumers by requiring contracts to be written in plain language. The legislation also ensures that contracts clearly outline which services come with the basic fee and which result in extra charges. It requires wireless providers to get customer consent before amending, renewing or extending fixed-term contracts. It also enforces a cap on cancellation fees, making it less expensive for consumers to walk away from contracts, and it provides all-in pricing requirements that will let consumers know the all-in monthly costs of their cellphone and wireless services contracts.

With increasing use of wireless services across Canada and Ontario, we realized that we needed to do more to protect consumers. Our new legislation protects Ontario cellphone users by ensuring that they know their rights and that they are better informed.

As I stated earlier, World Consumer Rights Day offers an opportunity to promote the basic rights of all consumers. But consumer protection is more than just a one-day-a-year event. It's something that we should think about all the time. For this reason, we've established a new consumer education program called Consumer Protection Ontario. It offers information on consumer rights and

public safety and lets people know where to go to help protect themselves. Consumer Protection Ontario also encourages people to ask the right questions before completing a transaction or signing a contract for services. By directing people to where they can get answers to their questions, Speaker, we hope consumers will stand up for their rights and be better informed to make decisions before they make a purchase or enter into a contract.

This is all part of the ministry's role in educating, protecting and serving Ontario consumers by ensuring a fair, safe and informed marketplace. As a result of this commitment by our government, Ontarians benefit from some of the strongest consumer protection and public safety standards in all of North America.

This is part of our government's economic plan that is creating jobs for today and tomorrow, and it will enhance our economic competitiveness and make Ontario a more desirable place to live, work and invest.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries?

It's now time for responses.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Transportation on his introduction of a new transportation bill. I should point out that our transportation critic is arriving a little later this afternoon, so that's why I'm honoured to have this job. Our member from Elgin-Middlesex-London will be in shortly.

I certainly would also like to acknowledge all the visitors in the gallery representing many different organizations—and Mr. Flynn—who are here this afternoon and have an interest in this transportation bill.

1340

I note that the bill does pick up from parts of at least four private members' bills. The member from Scarborough-Rouge River had a distracted driving demerit points bill, which I think certainly has merit. The member from Parkdale-High Park had the one-metre passing rule. The member from Simcoe North had a private member's bill to do with tow trucks and trying to afford them the same safety that police and ambulance now enjoy, where you move over a lane if you see a tow truck at the side. I think there have been some tragic accidents for tow truck operators, and that's an effort to make the highways safer for them and others. Of course, my own—I'm in a bit of a conflict, Mr. Speaker, as my own private member's bill, Bill 137, the paved shoulders for cyclists bill, is also, as far as I understand, to be incorporated.

Of course, we haven't seen the bill so I'll look forward to seeing the bill, but my private member's bill, of course, would require a minimum of a one-metre paved shoulder on designated provincial highways when they're being reconstructed and also would change the Highway Traffic Act so that it would in fact be legal to drive on paved shoulders.

As I've stated previously, I think that makes sense for a number of reasons: safety for pedestrians, cyclists,

automobile drivers, and truck drivers as well, being certainly one of the number one reasons to do it. Health—the fact that the main reason people don't cycle is that they're worried about their safety. So the more safe places you can provide for people to cycle, the more likelihood people will get out and cycle, and, of course, that has positive effects for the population.

I see I'm out of time so I will not go on. I'll allow my other critic to talk about the other bill. We look forward to seeing the bill in detail and taking it to our caucus.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Toby Barrett: On March 15, 1962, President Kennedy gave a speech which led to the creation of the Consumer Bill of Rights, and on March 15, 1983, a number of organizations began organizing and observing that date to promote basic rights.

I will point out that the Progressive Conservative Party has always been in the forefront of an open, trustworthy consumer market, and we as government tabled and enacted the Consumer Protection Act in 2002.

World Consumer Rights Day is an opportunity to promote basic rights, demanding those rights be respected and protected. It's also an opportunity to fight abuse in the marketplace, social injustice which would undermine the rights that we are talking about today.

As we know, the focus this year is on the digital age. We do live in an era of ideas and information. Our digital world depends on communication networks, obviously the Internet and the ability to not only access but to share information across those networks. So the consumer movement itself has a very important role to ensure that these networks are accessible, affordable, reliable and safe.

Consumers remain drivers of this digital-based economy. Being provided with fast-spreading, timely information on the Internet on mobile devices, cellphones, better enables consumers to really be more knowledgeable about the product itself and the service, and to make meaningful purchases, ever bearing in mind the importance of ensuring we have competition, which obviously leads to lower product prices, and quality.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I'm only going to take a couple of minutes because we've got to share five minutes between the three of us, but I wanted to touch very quickly on three parts of the transportation bill.

I noticed that you are going to be amending section 28 of the current act in order to deal with truck lengths from 25 metres to 27½. I think you recognize as well as I do that there are people on both sides of this issue, and this is going to have to go to committee in order to be able to hear from people about the pros and cons of that, because certainly there are those in the trucking industry who would like to see the extension of trailers, but there are many others who, quite frankly, feel opposed.

Just very quickly, this last point on the amendment of section 45, which is the reporting of medical conditions that may affect the person's ability to drive: How many of us in our constituency office get phone calls and people dropping in because they have been reported, there's nothing wrong with them, and they can't get their driver's licence back without going through a really excruciating process? In small towns across Ontario where you don't have the TTC down the road in order to move you around, it's deadly. I've got people in Fauquier, Moonbeam, Hearst and a whole bunch of other places who have lost their licence because they happened to go into the doctor's office, and the doctor said, "I'm required to report that you may have a condition that will affect your driving." If you're going to expand this for other medical professionals to do this, we need a much better mechanism in order to get these people's licences back when they're improperly assessed and put in that position.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just want to respond also to the Minister of Transportation and say thank you for including the one-metre rule in your bill. I want to let folk know I tabled that bill almost four years ago in 2010—Bill 74. I want to give a shout-out to Eleanor McMahon, of Share the Road, who is now here, and also, of course, Cycle Toronto. These are the true heroes of cycling advocacy, so thank you, Eleanor, for Share the Road and all that you do.

The only thing I would say is, obviously, it's a long time in coming. I'm happy that the minister managed to change his Premier's mind, because I remember very clearly her speaking against this bill when it was first introduced. Times change; progress is made. This is good.

The other thing I would simply suggest is, of course, part of every new law is enforcement. One part of our bill was to up the fines, make it enforceable, make sure the enforcement happens as well as a change in law. I look forward to making some amendments perhaps to strengthen this.

Thank you so much. Thank you to everyone who worked on cycling safety. We need more cycling safety. There have been too many deaths, and we have to move forward.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party and our leader, Andrea Horwath, to add my thoughts to World Consumer Rights Day. When we speak about our rights, particularly when it comes to consumer rights—but in any circumstance when it comes to the discourse or the talk around rights—we have to talk about, on one hand, celebrating the fact that we have rights, but on the other hand, we have to talk about the reality that these rights are still being violated. There are a number of examples ongoing in our province where these rights which consumers—

people, individuals, humans—should have are being violated.

I know many people will agree with me with respect to their hydro bills. I know colleagues in this House have had their offices receive numerous calls and complaints from members of their community, from constituents, complaining about their Hydro One bills and the fact that Hydro One has consistently received complaints about their billing process. It has been escalated to the Ombudsman, and Hydro One is refusing to refund over-billing in favour of offering credit for future services, even when the overbilling amounts into the thousands of dollars. This is simply unacceptable, and we need to have this government actually do something instead of talking about rights—implementing some action to protect those rights. We call on this government, particularly when it comes to the Hydro One situation, to address the concerns of the people of Ontario, the consumers and citizens.

When we're speaking about consumer rights and we're talking about this year's theme, which is "Fix Our Phone Rights," while we have addressed some issues, it's still an issue of affordability and accessibility. Many people cannot afford it. Many people in rural Ontario or northern Ontario don't have access to coverage. That's an area that we need to really work on if we're truly interested in protecting people's consumer rights.

Lastly, auto insurance is an issue of consumer rights. The rates are far too high. Insurance companies are enjoying profits, and people are not getting the savings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Burlington on a point of order.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: No, no, a petition.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh. I thought it was introducing something. So we will not call it a point of order; we'll call it petitions.

1350

PETITIONS

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and who initiated this petition is my constituent Julie Harrington, who's here in the west gallery.

"Whereas public schools and boards of education provide junior and senior kindergarten students with access and use of school provided bicycles, tricycles and scooters without helmets; and

"Whereas this practice can and has resulted in head injuries; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the safety and well-being of our children in ministry funded programs, such as schools;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Either:

"(1) Prohibit schools and boards of education from providing bicycles, tricycles and scooters to junior and senior kindergarten programs; or

"(2) Schools and boards of education that wish to provide junior and senior kindergarten programs or any child with bicycles, tricycles and scooters must also provide helmets that are correctly sized for all children riding the equipment. Additionally, equipment must be checked and tracked monthly to ensure they are in good maintenance and pulled out of use if in need of any repair."

I support this and will affix my signature and give it to page Mira to deliver.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I believe we were able to do both: introduce and introduce the petition. So welcome. We're glad you're with us today.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I fully agree with this petition and present it to page Eli.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the Ontario government has raised minimum wage by 50% since 2003 and will increase it to \$11, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada, on June 1;

"Whereas both families and businesses in Ontario deserve a fair and predictable approach to setting the minimum wage;

"Whereas indexing minimum wage to CPI is supported by business, labour and anti-poverty groups from across Ontario as the best way to achieve that;

"Whereas indexing ensures minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, providing fairness for work-

ers and their families and predictability for businesses to plan and stay competitive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014."

I fully support the petition, and I will give my petition to page Samantha.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Steve Clark: I have hundreds of names on a petition and, in addition, 5,000 names online.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the University of Guelph's Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario's outstanding post-secondary agricultural schools; and

"Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario and the future success of the region's agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

"Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph's short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support and send it to the table with page Anthony.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from one of my constituents, Cléo St-Onge of Chelmsford, Ontario, in Nickel Belt.

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Bani to bring it to the Clerk.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry, and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

"Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of technology than having email;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal devices, maximize the many technology offerings and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario."

I certainly agree with this petition, sign it and send it to you via page Eli, direct delivery to Todd Decker of the table.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that

Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario health insurance plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I affix my name in support.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Enbridge Canada is proposing to reverse the flow of the Line 9 pipeline in order to transport western oil and tar sands oil through the most densely populated parts of Ontario;

"Whereas this pipeline project proposes changes to the pipeline that merit serious consideration, like the increase in oil carrying capacity and the transport of significantly more corrosive oil through the pipeline;

"Whereas this pipeline passes under cities and major rivers and a spill would risk the drinking water and health of millions of Ontarians and cause permanent damage to ecosystems;

"Whereas Line 9's reversal will have impacts that must be analyzed beyond the National Energy Board hearings held by the federal government;

"Whereas the government of Quebec has already indicated its intention to conduct an independent review of the line reversal impact, including the flow of oil sands crude into Quebec;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario acts in the best interest of the health and environment of the province and conduct a full environmental assessment of Enbridge's proposed Line 9 reversal and capacity expansion projects."

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm proud to affix my signature and counter the heckling.

1400

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition also to the Minister of the Environment, who is here.

"Whereas Roseplain Solar Farm Partnership has applied to the Ministry of the Environment for an update in its renewable energy approval application for a solar farm development at 5240 Concession Road 4, RR#1 in the township of Uxbridge;

"Whereas residents adjacent to the proposed project strongly object to a large industrial development on valuable agricultural land and woodlands;

"Whereas possible adverse impacts include reduced property values due to the appearance of the solar development;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has announced cancellation of two proposed nuclear reactors because of surplus generating capacity and furthermore we, as citizens, are concerned that the paying of a large subsidy to a foreign company for many years to come will add to the already enormous public debt incurred for building additional generating capacity;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature not to proceed with this large scale industrial development, in view of the adverse impacts it will have on our community and our province."

I'm pleased to sign this and to give it to Anthony to present it.

ONTARIO RANGER PROGRAM

Mr. Michael Mantha: "We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw attention to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"The Ontario Ranger Program takes youth out of their comfort zones by taking youth from the south and placing them in northern camps and vice versa, allowing for personal growth;

"The Ontario Ranger Program also helps nearby rural communities as the Ontario Rangers help with various work projects and build partnerships within the communities; the work is recognized and appreciated by these small communities;

"An extensive amount of work maintaining the interior routes in major provincial parks such as Quetico, Algonquin and Temagami is completed by Ontario Rangers on multi-day overnight canoe trips (and is otherwise unreachable);

"The lifelong skills and friendships built during the Ontario Ranger Program help youth develop into mature, confident, independent individuals, which is well worth the money spent on the program;

"Low-income and high-risk youth sent to rangers are isolated from their home situation and are exposed to the positive team-building environment within the Ontario Ranger Program;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demonstrate that the Ontario Ranger Program is a valuable program to the youth of Ontario, reverse the decision to close the Ontario Ranger Program and continue to help youth make a difference in Ontario."

I agree with this petition, and I affix my signature and present this to page Nusaybah.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the University of Guelph's Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario's outstanding post-secondary agricultural schools; and

"Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario and the future success of the region's agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

"Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph's short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses."

I will be signing this and passing it on to Simon.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I agree with this petition and present it to page Jonah to bring down to the Clerks.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: You will all like this one for sure.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors from more than 80 municipalities and Ontario's largest

farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, seek an immediate moratorium on ... wind development" projects awaiting approval "until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

"Whereas the provincial Liberal government's study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than that it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

"Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of health impacts of wind turbines;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately."

I strongly endorse it, will sign it and send it with page Samantha. Thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The time for petitions has in fact expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FIGHTING FRAUD AND REDUCING AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE RATES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 DE LUTTE CONTRE LA FRAUDE ET DE RÉDUCTION DES TAUX D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE

Mrs. Jeffrey, on behalf of Mr. Sousa, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 171, An Act respecting insurance system reforms and repair and storage liens / Projet de loi 171, Loi concernant les réformes du système d'assurance et le privilège des réparateurs et des entrepreneurs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the minister to lead off the debate.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Thank you, Speaker. I will be sharing my time with the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, the member from Vaughan.

I'm pleased to stand in the House today to speak to Bill 171, the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act. For my constituents, like many others, having a car is not a luxury; it's a necessity for families, whether they're going to the doctor's, to their jobs or to school. They need their cars to help them take their parents, their grandparents, to medical appointments, to make sure their children can get to school—wherever you need to get to, it's a necessity.

For many in Brampton, the cost of this necessity is far too high. As the member for Brampton-Springdale, I represent a community that has some of the highest car

insurance rates anywhere in the province. That's not something I'm proud of. In fact, it's certainly a handicap in my community. As the mother of three sons, I know first-hand how expensive car insurance rates can be for middle-class families. It is a very high cost and we need to find a way to address it, and I welcome this debate on how we can deal with these challenges. That's why it's so important for us to move forward with Bill 171. This bill, if passed, is a practical step in helping us curb the price of auto insurance.

Fraud continues to be a major burden on our system, increasing rates for honest drivers to pay for dishonest ones. In fact, the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force noted that this increasingly pervasive fraud has a "substantial impact on ... premiums" for Ontarians. Fraud costs Ontario and its drivers across this province, and residents of my riding of Brampton-Springdale, almost \$1 billion a year, inflating insurance premiums and hurting Ontario families.

Despite the fact that the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force brought forward some very useful recommendations back in 2011, we still must work hard to inform Ontarians about fraud. In fact, a little over a year ago—I remember it was a snowy winter night—I had just finished my House duty. I drove through the snowstorm to Brampton and I held a town hall to discuss auto insurance and fraud with some very interested and motivated residents of Brampton, people from across the sector. There were people in the auto insurance sector, in the insurance business, and just residents who had communicated to me their frustration with this issue.

My residents and the business owners and I talked about how fraud can take different forms, whether it's higher-than-necessary medical service claims, claims for treatment that is never rendered, or even staging accidents that are concocted only to make an illegitimate claim. In fact, I remember one individual, who is from the insurance sector, found out his wife had had an accident. Earlier that week, she phoned him and said, "They're taking my vehicle. It's being towed to an auto yard." When she asked why the car was being towed to that particular yard that was far outside the distance of the accident, she was told by the tow truck operator that he was offered a bonus. So, clearly, there is some fraud in the system. I believe that it's critical to deal with this problem.

1410

Bill 171 is not the only action our government has already taken to reduce auto insurance fraud. In fact, back in September 2010, we introduced over 40 reforms that began to stabilize rates and bring them down while cracking down on fraud. These changes make the system more affordable, especially for the millions of Ontario drivers who never make a claim.

This bill, if passed, will give much-needed direction so that we can make progress on the work that our government has already undertaken to transform how the insurance system deals with dispute resolution.

The mediation and arbitration system was originally created to help everyday Ontarians resolve their disputes in a timely way, making it easier and less costly for families. However, over time, things have evolved and the system no longer works as effectively or efficiently as it once did. After having an extensive consultation process, this bill proposes to make a number of changes that will increase the efficiency and the timeliness of the dispute resolution system.

Changes like moving the system to the Licence Appeal Tribunal will make the process faster and more efficient, all the while reducing systemic costs. This move also reduces the chance of conflict with the regulator of insurance companies, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario—FSCO—which currently also holds power to adjudicate some of these disputes. This bill, if passed, would make it less frustrating for consumers, reducing uncertainty, and will ultimately help control costs.

This bill, if passed, would modernize disciplinary hearings, protecting consumers from those agents and adjusters who are engaging in deceptive actions to increase revenue. If passed, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario will have the authority to suspend or revoke licences, ensuring that consumers, whether they're in Brampton or Burlington, Wawa or Windsor, will be protected. All of these changes will lead to stability in claim costs while reducing the pressure of fraudulent costs, resulting in lower rates for Ontarians over the long term. These are pragmatic, comprehensive and, I believe, sensible solutions that we need to ensure that Ontarians are protected from fraudsters as well as rising insurance costs.

Speaker, there are no easy solutions—I know that—which is why we need everybody to work together to find practical, workable solutions like Bill 171, to help combat those changes. Unfair insurance rates affect members in this Legislature from Peterborough to Sault Ste. Marie and Peel, which is why I'm pleased to stand in the House today to speak in favour of Bill 171, in order to fight fraud and reduce automobile insurance rates.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Continuing the debate, the member for Vaughan.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I always like to begin my remarks in this House, regardless of the topic, by talking for a brief moment about the privilege that it is—not just for me, but I think for all of us—to have a chance to stand in our respective places, representing all of our communities, regardless of which side of this Legislature we happen to be serving on, Speaker, to speak about the stuff that's taking place, those deliberations that people are taking very seriously.

There is a great deal that I want to discuss with respect to Bill 171, regarding its importance and the very positive impact that it will have, when passed, on the Ontario government's determined undertaking to make sure that we continue with our auto insurance cost-reduction strategy.

I want to spend just a brief moment at the outset of my remarks talking a little bit about some of my colleagues

who, for quite some time, have been working very, very hard on this particular issue and have been advocating very, very strongly, and very successfully, I think, here on the floor of the Legislature, but also in our caucus room and in dealing with stakeholders in representing their communities.

Obviously, right before I stood here this afternoon, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who represents Brampton–Springdale here in this Legislature, spoke very eloquently, as she always does, about this issue. This is an issue that this particular minister, this particular member of our caucus, has been discussing with all of us for quite some time—and doing an extraordinary job representing her community and making sure that we all understand the impact that this issue has been having on her constituents.

I think of many others here on this side of the House, like my dear friend the member from Scarborough–Agincourt, the member from Scarborough–Rouge River, every single member of our caucus from Scarborough: Scarborough–Guildwood, Scarborough Centre, Scarborough Southwest. I can think of the member from Etobicoke North. There are many—Brampton West, Mississauga–Streetsville—who have been advocating for quite some time. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence has consistently and passionately stood here in this House. He has also stood in caucus. He has stood elsewhere. He has met with stakeholders who are feeling the impacts directly of what we are doing here. Of course, I'd be remiss if I didn't also acknowledge and praise the efforts of Ontario's Attorney General for the work that he does on a regular basis, not just as it relates to the auto insurance file but, generally speaking, the work that he does.

All of those discussions, all of that work that has taken place leading up to budget 2013 and since budget 2013 has helped Ontario's Minister of Finance and our government come forward with a very clear—and very successful, thus far—cost and rate reduction strategy. I also want to pay tribute. I'm very fortunate because I have the chance to serve as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance. Everyone will know that this is an issue—the auto insurance file—that has taken hold, at various times, of the imagination and the discussion that occurs here in this chamber. This is not an easy and straightforward file necessarily. Insurance, generally speaking, and auto insurance in particular, is a complex file. I think the Minister of Finance and his team deserve a great deal of consideration and praise for the work that they have put into making sure that we have a cost and rate reduction strategy that is successful but a strategy that's also balanced and fair. Those things are really important as we consider how we proceed on this matter.

I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs, in her lead-off remarks, discussed some of the elements that in particular can be found here in Bill 171. Folks on every side of this House will have heard our government speak repeatedly about the importance of making sure that, as we go forward with this strategy, in order for it to be successful, in order for us to ensure that we continue to

hit the targets that we laid out in budget 2013—and let's just remember for a quick second that those targets were a 15% reduction in auto insurance on average across the province of Ontario over two years. As we continue down that path toward meeting that goal—which we are, Speaker—it is really important for us to work as a government with everybody involved in the system to ensure that we drive out the opportunities for fraudulent behaviour at every turn. We see measures in Bill 171 specifically that will help ensure that, as we continue down that path towards that 15% reduction on average across the province over two years, we're able to continue meeting our marks.

I think everyone in the House will know—and when I say this, it's not simply rhetoric—that our strategy is working. At the most recent opportunity for the industry to report on the reduction in auto insurance rates, we have seen thus far roughly a 5% drop since budget 2013. That's actually right on schedule, and in fact, by some measures, it's even perhaps a bit ahead of schedule to that interim target that we set for, I believe, August of this year of hitting an 8% reduction. We are well on our way to accomplishing the goal that we committed to back in budget 2013.

Because I'm a big believer in that whole notion of past behaviour helping to inform and helping to suggest or predict what future behaviour might be, I think it would work quite well in this case if members from every single caucus would join with us here at second reading of Bill 171 and support the measures that we brought forward to continue to drive down auto insurance rates across the province on average over the next little while.

I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing did discuss that notion of making sure we continue to fight fraud, that we continue to do what we can to protect consumers in her riding, Brampton–Springdale, and the ridings and the communities that exist in Etobicoke and Scarborough and elsewhere right around this province, and that is, of course, varying insurance. I know that the minister also referenced the idea that we are working towards, among other things, both in the content of Bill 171, but also the remarks that were made by the Minister of Finance on the day that the bill was introduced—we continue to take a look at a number of very proactive and positive measures: working with Ontario's towing industry and contemplating perhaps the need for additional province-wide regulation of said industry, working between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of the Attorney General—and I will once again note the outstanding work of the Attorney General, who has long been an advocate for making sure that we continue to move forward in a positive way on all of these files; and the possibility of both the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of the Attorney General working on what, I guess, could somewhat colloquially be called a “fraud squad,” to make sure that there would be resources and work undertaken to help assist in that notion of driving out fraud in the system that unfortunately is driving up costs.

1420

We also in this bill take further steps with respect to the dispute resolution system. As many will know, this is something that has plagued the auto insurance industry from the perspective of a system that was designed with the best of intentions but, over time, has become bogged down—has become somewhat gummed up, I guess, is the best way to describe it.

Of course, the government appointed a very well respected individual not that long ago, the Honourable J. Douglas Cunningham, a former Associate Chief Justice of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, to review the dispute resolution system and come back with recommendations on how we can streamline the process. Bill 171 takes many of the recommendations made by the retired justice and helps us move forward with them.

It should be noted that when Justice Cunningham undertook his review, he also embarked on an extensive consultation process which included input from 35 stakeholders, written submissions and in-person meetings. I mention this just to illustrate to the House that this was not work that was done lightly on an important and fairly technical and complex matter. This was undertaken, as one would expect, in the most professional way possible. That's why it's important for us here on this side of the House, with Bill 171, to make sure that we move forward with those recommendations.

There are a number of other elements that deserve mention in Bill 171, from the notion of service-provider licensing to the agent and the reforms or the adjustments that we're making to the agent and adjuster disciplinary process. I know the issue of vehicle storage is something that often ignites a very passionate discussion around the issue of auto insurance. I know of course that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing did discuss the idea of vehicle storage, but I think it is really important for those listening in our respective communities to understand that we are proposing in Bill 171 to provide authority to reduce the number of days within which a storer has to give notice to the owner that they have their vehicle in storage.

Currently, when a vehicle has been damaged in an accident, it may be towed to a storage facility after the collision. Those who store vehicles after accidents can begin charging for storage services right away, even though the owner of the vehicle is often unaware of where their car is located and that it's accumulating charges every single day. Storer's can hold a vehicle and can accumulate those storage charges or claims for up to 60 days, currently, without giving any notice. So this bill, Bill 171, seeks to reduce the time period, would cut down on abusive storage practices and would remove many of the associated costs from the auto insurance system.

This is just one other example, Speaker, of those elements that are contained in Bill 171 because of that exceptional advocacy that has existed here in this government since the months leading up to budget 2013, and certainly in the time since budget 2013, with respect to

our cost and rate reduction strategy as it relates to auto insurance.

I think it is really important to note, not just with respect to the specific elements of the bill but also from a general standpoint, that those on this side of the House, as we move forward with continuing to implement our plan to make sure that we hit those targets, that we continue to hit those targets, if not exceed the targets around the rate reduction—it's important to note that we're on the side of making sure that those who are in the system, those who are insured, are getting a fair deal. I think you'll see in Bill 171 and in the work that's been undertaken by the Minister of Finance and his team, by everyone in our caucus, on this side, that this is why it's extremely important for members of the opposition caucus, members of the third party, the NDP, to join with us.

In my 18 months or so as an MPP representing the wonderful community of Vaughan, I've heard various members from both of the opposition parties speak at committee and also here in this chamber about this issue of auto insurance. I know that there is a wide variety of opinions that have been expressed, some very eloquently—many, many times very eloquently—and lots of personal anecdotes and stories about stuff that we all hear from our respective communities because, of course, this is an issue that periodically, depending on which community one of us might represent, flares up in a constituency office. It certainly has in mine. There are several drivers who have come to see me over the last 18 months, living in the community of Woodbridge, which is a small portion—an important yet small portion—of my community of Vaughan, and who have expressed concerns about their auto insurance rates. But they've also expressed encouragement. They've expressed their happiness with the notion that our government is taking their concerns very seriously and that we are moving forward, not only with the commitments we made in Bill 171, not only with the ideas, the reforms, the recommendations that we have already moved on, but seeing, just recently, the Minister of Finance introduce this particular Bill 171, understanding that this wasn't simply a budget 2013 commitment that we made, to much fanfare, back last May and then said, "It's going to be up there on a shelf and we're not going to talk about it anymore."

We recognize that when you're dealing with a complex issue and when you're on the right side of this issue, when you're on the side of those who are using the system, when you are doing your best as a government to make sure that you are backing up and reinforcing those who need help the most and that you're not, perhaps, taking into account and defending the interests of some other participants in the system, when you are really focused on doing what's right, which is what our government is focused on doing here, it is something that requires ongoing work. It's something that requires ongoing attention, and that is why we have moved forward here with Bill 171. I look forward to the rest of the discussion and debate that will take place here in the

House regarding this bill and regarding these matters, generally speaking.

I certainly don't believe that the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing or any of my other colleagues who have been such effective and staunch advocates for this particular rate and cost reduction strategy—this is not to suggest, and no one has on this side of the House, that our work is done. In order for us to continue to drive down these rates, in order for us to continue to make sure that we meet, if not exceed, what we have promised the people of Ontario, that 15% rate reduction, on average, across the province over two years, we need to continue our work. We need members of both opposition parties to work with us, to be constructive in their suggestions, and I hope that over the course of the debate on Bill 171 here at second reading we will hear constructive suggestions about how to continue to move this forward. The people of all of our communities, particularly those who are most affected, are looking to us to demonstrate leadership.

We, on this side of the House, will continue to do that as we go forward into the future. Whether it's embracing other forms of technology that help us deal with this—it could be telematics; it could be other stuff—we will continue to work as hard as we can, as we have over these past number of months, to move this agenda forward in the most positive way, but also in the most balanced and responsible way.

With that, I'm very, very happy to have had the chance to stand in my place to speak very strongly in favour of Bill 171, and I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to rise and acknowledge my colleague across the floor. Once again, unfortunately, sadly, I actually have to say that this is yet another bill that seems to be fast-tracked by the Liberals. There's very little consultation. They come out and tell everybody what they're going to do, then they start, on the back of that napkin, re-scribbling more of their notes, saying, "Oh, we didn't think of that. We didn't think of this." Again, it's one of those where, to my dismay, the NDP again kind of jumped on that bandwagon, making the big 30-second headline, but there's really not a lot of substance behind it. We're now seeing, as always, that there are unintended and negative consequences to these bills that are rushed through to make a headline in the paper. We just can't, as a province, afford this anymore. We need to start really putting in thought before we run these things out to the press and making it up the flagpole as we go.

We have lots of concern. We have experts now who are actually starting to agree with us, certainly from the insurance industry. They provided facts to us that said that just grabbing a 15% reduction out of thin air wasn't going to work. How do you implement it? What's the implication? How do we do it? How do we remain viable?

State Farm had 11% of the Ontario market, and they've actually left Ontario. They've just said, "You know what? This is ridiculous. There's a reality here that we can't deal with." In my constituency office I'm hearing that more and more drivers are being dropped by their insurance carriers as they try to rid their books of even the most moderate risks out there. We all have insurance because of that unfortunate mishap that may happen out of our control, but if we have fewer people to choose from—which is happening. We're having more and more of the carriers leaving. It's becoming much more competitive. A lot of people are frustrated. They're without coverage. Their rates are increasing, as often happens when you have fewer players in the market, and it certainly is a case that wasn't well thought out. They jumped on the bandwagon with regard to headlines, and, again, I fault the NDP for jumping on, saying it's 15% with no real thought, no consultation—truly—with the industry.

Mr. Speaker, we need to do better. We need to ensure that insurance is viable for those people who need it, at the best times, and I thank you for the opportunity to bring my points across.

1430

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, the problem with this bill is that while we absolutely support the idea of getting rid of fraud—that's absolutely something that is the right thing to do—this bill does something very different. It actually further benefits the insurance companies to the detriment of and cost to the drivers, with no guarantee that this further encroachment on their rights will actually reduce premiums.

The hope is that by further cutting the costs of the insurance companies, that somehow magically will bring premiums down, when we know that in 2010 insurance companies enjoyed one of the most historic cuts to their costs.

Imagine you're an industry and overnight one change to the legislation by this Liberal government resulted in a 50% cut in your costs in one of the most fundamental components of your business. Imagine what that would do to your profits. Imagine what that would do to your viability. Well, that's what this government did. In 2010, the government capped the amount that people could receive, the amount that insurance companies had to pay out for statutory accident benefits. Well, the capping of that benefit resulted in the premiums going up instead of going down. The premiums went up from 2010 to just recently.

Now the government has announced a reduction, but there is no guarantee that giving a further benefit to insurance companies will bring our rates down. We saw that the biggest reduction ever to costs resulted in premiums going up. So, again, there's nothing in this bill that guarantees a reduction, that guarantees a benefit to drivers, but I will go into great detail how it's going to hurt drivers in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker, and a happy St. Patrick's Day to you.

Two years ago, I chaired the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs when we did the cross-Ontario tour, and very conspicuous by their absence, of all of the dozens and dozens of presentations we heard, were insurance companies. But, boy, we certainly heard what was wrong with the industry.

Now, I have two parties on the other side who have opposed what the government is doing because the government had actually listened to what people told us, who told us in very specific detail, "Here are some things that you can do to fix it." So we fixed it, and now the Conservatives don't like it, and the NDP don't like it. I've got to think that somewhere or other, we're probably on the right track here.

For example, last year the province agreed to reduce insurance rates by 15%. Now, the province doesn't have either a big stick or a magic wand. Those rates have to be introduced by insurance companies themselves, because the province of Ontario doesn't sell insurance. How are we doing so far? After six months, we are well on track to achieve that reduction, because in just six months, rates are down nearly 5%.

What's the next step? The next step in the plan is to further fight fraud. If there was one thing we heard two years ago, it was: Exactly how do you perpetrate fraud? One of the things that really rankled all of us when we listened to that was the notion that fraud is just marked up and passed on to the consumer. Well, that's going to stop, and that's what this bill does: It takes some very concrete measures to stop that practice and to put savings back into the pockets of the insured, the people who pay the policy premiums. So, Speaker, this is the next step in Ontario's plan to further fight fraud, reduce costs and lower rates for drivers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to rise here and comment on Bill 171 and the comments made opposite. Interesting—I had the chance of opening up my insurance bill last November, and I was really hoping to see some decrease, but instead I saw a significant increase.

Interjection.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I know. Maybe we'll see something different, but I have yet to see a decrease. That reminds me of, going back a few years, when this government took over and promised a freeze on those insurance rates, and the same thing happened. My insurance premiums came up in November. I called up the insurance company and I said, "You know, there's a commitment to freeze insurance rates, and mine were up substantially." They said, "Well, as soon as the government puts through legislation to freeze rates, we'll go back to the old rates." And that never happened. I guess that was promise number one that was broken.

Mr. Bill Walker: The health care tax was actually the first promise that was broken.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Well, yeah. Anyway, that was something that they just never held through.

I think the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound talked about the lack of consultation. We're receiving comments from the insurance industry asking us that we meet with the government and try to make sure they consult with the industry. We're not seeing that being done, but instead we see an insurance program in this province that's out of whack with reality, with rates escalating. But a lot of that is their own doing as they've off-loaded health care costs onto auto insurance and WSIB. I guess the people that are really in trouble are the people who are unlucky enough not to get hurt either driving a car or at work, because then you have no insurance. But boy, if they can tack all these costs onto something like the auto insurance rates—that's really the reason why we're seeing the big increase, along with the fraud. Since I've been here—years before I even came here—I heard about the problems of fraud. They seem to be getting interested in that. So we're waiting to see.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has two minutes.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member from Vaughan, the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, the member from Mississauga–Streetsville and the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. I heard some interesting comments in the wrap-up, in the last few statements. I think, certainly, we heard from the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton that there are no guarantees and there's no magic. I agree with him: There are no short-cuts to this. We didn't get in this state overnight.

We've been trying to disassemble all the pieces that contribute to the fraud. I know the Ministry of Consumer Services is looking at the tow truck industry, certainly a contributor to some of the increased costs. We've looked at health clinics. We've looked at the physio component, whether people are being billed for services they don't receive. Now we're looking at the arbitration piece. We've made some steps to decrease the costs by 5%, but it's a work in progress.

We've heard from a number of members in this House, today and in the past, about some of the frustration they have with this unwieldy system. I think what we're trying to do today is put something constructive, something concrete, in place that will help all of the members of this House and, in particular, their constituents find a system that is fairer and more reasonable and that will help fight the fraud that we believe is driving up the costs associated with the system.

I believe that there is some constructive debate that comes as a result of Bill 171, and the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act is part of a strategy that our government has brought forward. In conversations, in our last budget, with the NDP, we found a way to develop a number and a target and a goal that we both share in wanting to reduce rates and

make it fair for Ontarians so that they can drive to doctors' appointments or to their children's or their grandparents' place with reasonable costs for insurance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to stand down our lead on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Parry Sound—Muskoka is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to stand down the lead of the official opposition. Agreed? Agreed.

Again I recognize the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to speak to Bill 171, An Act respecting insurance system reforms and repair and storage liens. That, of course, is dealing with the auto insurance business. There's a number of different acts that are affected by this bill. It affects the Insurance Act, 1990; the Financial Services Commission of Ontario Act, 1997; the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Act; the License Appeal Tribunal Act, 1999; and the Repair and Storage Liens Act. Our critic, the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London, is making his way in as we speak, so I'm standing in for him at this time. He's been our lead on auto insurance and has done an awful lot of work. I'll certainly point out some of the work he has done in the time I have available, but he will be in later to talk his full hour on this bill and in much more detail than I will be, being a last-minute fill-in.

1440

Certainly auto insurance is a significant issue. We know that the government and the NDP made a deal last year, the NDP propping up the government and demanding a 15% reduction in auto insurance which, in itself—we all want to see the most reasonable auto insurance for ourselves, for our constituents and for businesses. The question is—the government's just decreeing, "Well, that's the way to get there." We said at the time that there would be unintended consequences, and we're starting to see that now. In fact, a healthy insurance market is one that's competitive and has lots of companies competing for the business.

Recently, one company, State Farm, a company that held a significant 11% of the auto insurance market in Ontario, has picked up and left Canada, citing the Ontario auto insurance market as the primary reason. Certainly I'm seeing on a constituency level situations where drivers are being dropped by their insurance carriers as insurance companies try to just get rid of the most minimum of risk. I have scenarios where constituents are contacting me because they've had one minor incident and all of a sudden, they can't get auto insurance. These are the kinds of unintended consequences that happen as there's a shrinking availability of auto insurance in Ontario.

Going back to this 15% rate reduction promise—again, availability of insurance is a significant issue. So, late last year, State Farm sold its entire property and

casualty business in Canada. They cited the Ontario auto insurance market as a key reason for this. This is a bad trend. As New Jersey promised to cut rates by 15% in 1998, numerous companies left the market at that time, making auto insurance very difficult to obtain. While rates did come down by 15% over two years, the lack of availability led to a 27% spike in premiums after that. So it was a short-term benefit but then a big increase after. Unfortunately, that's the sort of thing we could see happening here in Ontario.

It's worth noting what the CEO of the Financial Services Commission of Ontario said to the Standing Committee on General Government just last April 15, 2013. He said, "So any move that required all companies to cut rates I think would be a very dangerous move. As well as that, I think you would find situations where people would just have less access to insurance and perhaps be forced into the" Facility Association, "paying much higher rates than they currently are." That's Philip Howell, CEO of the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, at the Standing Committee on General Government on April 15, 2013.

Another thing we're seeing with the way the government is going about this is that bad drivers are getting the biggest discounts. In the most recent rate filings in January, the biggest winners were those insured by non-standard insurers. These companies insure the worst drivers, including those with multiple accidents and drinking-and-driving convictions. The non-standard companies and their respective rate reductions are as follows: Perth Insurance, a 15% reduction; Pafco Insurance, 14.5%; Echelon General Insurance, 8.7%. So I don't think that's something that is necessarily good. I think we want to see all drivers have the most reasonable insurance possible.

Certainly, the state in Ontario is a situation where we pay pretty much the highest insurance rates in North America. Especially when you add that on to the way the costs of everyday living are going up for constituents, it's just not a good thing. I'm sure my colleagues would tell you that part of the number one thing that people are hearing about in their constituency offices is increasing hydro costs, and it just seems like every day there's another significant increase happening that is a pocketbook issue that's affecting people. So certainly having the highest insurance rates is a bad thing.

Let's go through this bill a little bit. The bill addresses five priority areas relating to auto insurance in Ontario. The Liberals are touting this bill as part of their cost-reduction strategy, intended to help deliver 15% in savings to Ontario drivers. Overall, we see the bill as a small step forward.

I should also point out that this bill is something that we have yet to caucus. That is a normal process for us, to look in detail at a bill and look at all the nooks and crannies and decide if it's something that we can support. That has yet to happen.

The bill addresses five priority areas, but I will tell you what it's intended to do. Overall, it looks like it's a

small step forward. There are a few significant cost savings that could be achieved.

On the whole, it is supported by the insurance industry, because they consider it a step in the right direction. The trial lawyers support some of it but are looking for some changes. The medical and rehabilitation community is primarily concerned with the additional bureaucracy of the licensing requirements, which I'll discuss.

In the 2011 budget, the Liberals committed to reviewing the dispute resolution system that is available to insurance claimants. Currently, the industry regulator—and that's FSCO, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario—administers the process. A claimant who is denied certain coverage as prescribed by the SABS—the statutory accident benefits, the benefits that someone must purchase by law—by an insurer can initiate a dispute. The government appointed Justice Cunningham to conduct the review, and he delivered his final report in January.

There are three injury classifications under the current statutory no-fault coverage on an auto policy. There are minor injuries, which are sprains, soft-tissue injuries; there are non-catastrophic injuries; and there are catastrophic injuries, and those involve paralysis, loss of limbs etc. The minimum coverage amounts are \$3,500—for the minor injuries—\$50,000, and then \$1 million, respectively. Disputes mostly arise from whether a claimant's injuries are classified as minor or non-catastrophic.

When a claimant wishes to dispute a decision by their insurer, they must first go through a mediation session with a FSCO-employed mediator. That is where the bottlenecks are happening. In fact, in 2011, the Auditor General noted the mediation bottleneck and that there were 30,000 cases in backlog. That has come down now to some 16,000 cases, but it's certainly a significant backlog. That's an area that needs to be addressed, and there are some suggestions for improvements in this bill.

Our party has done some work, and we think we have some better solutions, which, if I get time, I will speak to.

Bill 171 will move the entire dispute resolution system to the Ministry of the Attorney General, to the already established Licence Appeal Tribunal. The implications for this move are:

—Dispute administrative costs are moved from industry-funded FSCO, where the users of the system were paying for it, to the taxpayer-funded Ministry of the Attorney General. There is no overall reduction but less pressure on auto insurance costs. You're just moving the costs into general government costs, so we all still end up paying for it, one way or another.

—Mediation services will still conceivably remain an issue. Whether mediation in its current form will remain, or whether it's merged with a pre-arbitration hearing, will be left to the regulations.

In the PC auto insurance action plan, we recommend having an option for a claimant and insurer to use private mediators. This gives claimants more choice and allows them to avoid long queues in the publicly administered mediation process.

—The bill also doesn't address the issue of why so many cases go to dispute in the first place. In our plan, the PCs have recommended using existing medical assessment guidelines to have truly independent third party assessments. This would make injury classifications more black and white and eliminate the need for mediation in some cases.

Mr. Speaker, one issue that is of shared concern among lawyers representing both claimants and insurers is the bill's prohibition of using the court system when a dispute involves a no-fault claim.

Ontario has a complex system. It has a hybrid insurance system that accommodates both tort claims—negligence, pain and suffering—and no-fault claims: accident benefits, home care, income replacement etc.

1450

Some cases have both a tort and no-fault component. Prohibiting the court system as an option for all disputes with a no-fault component means a claimant with both a tort and no-fault case will have to appear in court and in front of a tribunal separately. This is obviously inefficient and costly and does not make sense. So we have some suggestions to do with that.

Bill 171 proposes issuing licences for health care providers that provide services to auto accident victims. This aspect is meant to deal with fraudulent practices of certain health clinics, particularly in the GTA, that will overbill insurers or will bill for unperformed services. The issue of health clinics was addressed in the anti-fraud task force report that was released in November of 2012. The PC Party has recommended implementation of the recommendations in this report. So far, the government has addressed just four of the 38 recommendations. This current bill, Bill 171, would implement four more. The licence will solely deal with the business practices of the health clinic. While this is a recommendation of the anti-fraud task force report, it does require additional bureaucracy, as well as inspectors. Because FSCO is industry-funded, any additional costs, then, are obviously borne by automobile drivers.

We, the PC Party, feel that a better solution exists in the anti-fraud task force report in the way of designated managers who must be, and this is key, regulated health professionals. This solution ties into another aspect of the PC auto insurance action plan that calls for better utilization of the Health Claims for Auto Insurance—HCAI—electronic billing system. So I think that is key, that we think that there has to be a regulated health professional in charge of these health clinics.

We suggest that we scrap the licensing regime that is currently in the bill and instead require that all health clinics appoint a designated manager. Having a designated manager will be a requirement in order to bill insurers through the HCAI system. In the event of possible fraudulent billing practices, require FSCO to report the designated manager to their respective health college. Obviously, if you're a designated health professional, that's something you don't want to lose. That's why we think that's a good way to go.

The HCAI system is already in place, and health clinics wanting to bill insurers have to register with this system already. HCAI is able to track invoices from health clinics and is therefore able to identify abnormal billing patterns indicative of fraudulent practices. The advantage of this electronic system is that a clinic's ability to bill insurers can be cut off if they bill fraudulently. We feel there's opportunity to leverage what's already in place to provide oversight without additional bureaucracy. Having a regulated health professional responsible for the billing practices of its clinic creates a disincentive for fraudulent billing practices. It means that an individual's health professional licence is on the line, should they behave improperly.

Then there's a section on the licensing of insurance agents and adjusters. This section of the bill provides some clarity regarding licences for insurance agents and adjusters. This section of the bill can best be described as housekeeping. It essentially deals with the issuance, renewal, revocation and suspension of these licences. The superintendent of FSCO is authorized to issue or refuse to issue licences. If a licence issuance or renewal is refused, the licensee can request a hearing of the matter by the Financial Services Tribunal.

Then there's a section on storage and liens reforms. This part of the act requires that body shops and tow truck operators must give notice of vehicles in their possession to the owner of the vehicle in a reasonable time frame, particularly when the storer has reason to believe that the vehicle in their possession was received from a person other than the owner of the said vehicle. This is meant to cut down on fraud and treat consumers more fairly when it comes to storage rates. We support that part of the bill, although, as I say, we still are going to need to look at it in more depth and to caucus the bill.

As I mentioned, we have a comprehensive plan—the PC Party—to deal with auto insurance. The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London has worked very hard on that. It really has four components eliminating red tape to lower costs and enhance competition, and the key part of what our party is proposing is that you use a system called file-and-use rate-setting process which brings in a market competition, which brings in lower prices for insurance users.

We would also reform the dispute resolution process, allowing some private mediators. We would recommend dealing with the big issue of fraud, which is estimated at \$750 million to \$1.5 billion a year that obviously goes right to the cost insurers have to pay to drive their cars. So we're recommending that a special unit in the crown attorney's office investigate and prosecute fraud, and that's been proven successful in places like New Jersey and Britain.

We're suggesting, as I've already talked about, using the Health Claims for Auto Insurance system, the electronic system, to help identify abnormal billing patterns.

These reforms have proven successful in other places, and I think the government would be wise to study that plan carefully to see what has been proposed by our mem-

ber from Elgin–Middlesex–London. You can see them in detail online at www.ontarioipc.com/autoinsurance.

Mr. Speaker, in the last couple of minutes that I have left, one of the other items relating to automobile insurance and insurance that I wanted to bring to the attention of the Legislature that I've been hearing about in my riding is the issue of joint and several liability insurance from municipalities. I note that the member from Perth–Wellington brought forward a motion in the Legislature to deal with that.

I bring it up simply because I note that municipalities in my riding have been writing to me concerned about this and concerned about the increasing liability costs that municipalities are facing. In fact, the corporation of the township of Georgian Bay, so I can give you a sample of what they're saying—I received many of these from across Parry Sound–Muskoka—passed a motion saying:

“Be it resolved that Financial Services Report 2013-31 and the attached schedule ‘A’ be received; and

“That the committee of the whole recommends that council of the township of Georgian Bay support the recent efforts by Frank Cowan Company in demanding action on joint and several liability reform in Ontario; and

“That the council of the township of Georgian Bay requests the province of Ontario to continue to work with municipalities to develop a long-term and sustainable solution that will protect municipalities from rising litigation and claims costs which diverts funds for more critical, yet underfunded municipal services and infrastructure; and

“That a copy of this resolution be sent to the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Minister of Finance, the district of Muskoka and all lower-tier municipalities within the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and Norm Miller, MPP, Parry Sound–Muskoka.”

I received many of those, and that's another insurance-related issue that has been addressed by the member from Perth–Wellington. It's certainly significant that the municipalities are seeing their liability costs go up dramatically.

Mr. Speaker, I see I'm just about out of time. I would suggest that another auto-insurance-related issue that needs to be dealt with, and I'm certainly—probably the number two issue after hydro cost that I'm hearing about in my constituency has been road maintenance conditions this year. When you see last week a hundred-car pileup on Highway 400, this has got to be affecting auto insurance costs in the Province of Ontario. I don't have time to go into detail about that, but I'd simply say that the changes the government made in their contracts two years ago, where they signed very long-term contracts for winter road maintenance, are not working; there are a lot of problems. At another time I will go into that in further detail.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and today provide some remarks to the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka.

This bill talks about insurance, and to the people at home, the councils and mayors, what's trying to happen here is we're trying to bring insurance costs down to the people who actually pay the premiums, and hopefully we can take steps so that these savings won't just stay in the companies' hands but will be transferred down. I think that's been our goal in this corner of the House for quite a while, and it will continue to be our goal.

1500

The member brought up some points that I really agree with, and some I don't. Road maintenance: We do have some changes to make in road maintenance. Road maintenance, as a lot of other things, would indirectly impact insurance costs. I don't think there's any question about that.

From our experience, what's happened with the contracts—it hasn't been so much the privatization of the maintenance itself; it's been the privatization of who makes the call when the maintenance happens. I think that's been a big problem. It is certainly in my riding, that there's no one from the MTO who actually says, "Okay, so this road might meet standards, but right now, this road is unsafe. It just meets standards."

The only time they look at the road is after the event. They conduct an investigation after the event. But there's nobody right there, right then to say, "It might meet standards on paper, but people are going to get killed on that road." I think that's something we have to look at, and we shouldn't be looking at that for insurance; we should be looking at that to keep people safe. But it will have an impact on insurance costs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Premièrement, je voudrais souhaiter la bienvenue aux gens qui sont ici aujourd'hui, les amis et la famille, et les gens qui vont recevoir l'Ordre de la Pléiade.

Ça me fait plaisir aujourd'hui de me lever pour parler au sujet de la loi qui est présentement devant nous, la loi qui va, nous espérons, réduire les coûts de l'assurance-automobile. Alors, cette loi-là, nous prévoyons qu'elle va réduire dans les prochains deux ans les coûts de l'assurance-automobile par 15 %. Puis maintenant, depuis qu'on discute de cette réduction-là, on a déjà vu une réduction dans les coûts de l'assurance-automobile.

Maintenant, ce qu'on veut aussi, c'est aider et transformer le système de résolution de problèmes qu'on a présentement en cours. On a demandé à un juge de revoir cette formule-là que nous avons en place, et nous voulons l'améliorer parce qu'on est beaucoup mieux de réduire les coûts ou les disputes entre les deux parties avec la médiation. On veut aussi « licencier » ceux qui offrent des services de santé suite à un accident d'automobile et aussi on veut réduire le temps que les autos qui ont été saisies vont passer en storage.

Alors, tout ça va aider à améliorer et à réduire les coûts d'automobile qui étaient toujours grandissants. Bien sûr, on ne veut pas non plus que les autres paient pour ceux qui ont plusieurs accidents et ceux aussi qui ont des contraventions parce qu'ils font des excès de vitesse.

Je pourrai continuer dans un prochain deux minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Je ne veux pas parler en français. Je vais parler en anglais, mais j'ai compris ce que—what the member for community safety has said. I said I understood what she had said.

I don't think the Thornhill riding is very different from the other ridings. I think that people are afraid to put through insurance claims because they see their costs go up. In fact, they're afraid to put through a call to their insurance company, because oftentimes their insurance goes up and they haven't even put through a claim. They're just calling to ask about possibly putting through a claim. People are raising their deductibles to the maximum possible because they're afraid to put through claims. So they're paying more for insurance and getting less.

I think we all have seen on our credit cards where it's put on hold suddenly and we're calling our spouse: "Did you pay the bill?" But what happened is it was put on hold because of possible suspected fraud. Why? Because we bought gas for two different cars on the same credit card the same day, and maybe we bought an electronic device, and that sends off a warning signal, because it's all computerized. If you buy gas—and I urge you all to go try this—for two different cars, fill up the same day on the same credit card, and buy an electronic device, your credit card might be put on hold, to make sure it's you, because the first thing people do when they steal a credit card is buy gas and electronic devices, for multiple cars.

Why can't the insurance industry, in conjunction with the government, figure out how to have these kinds of warning systems in place? Thornhillers were told for years that we were the worst drivers in Ontario and that's why we had the highest insurance costs. Concord, which is our neighbour, shares a postal code with us and was asking for a different postal code to be implemented, so that they didn't have to.

We have to bring down the insurance costs and work with the credit card companies—my time is out—to see what we can do to decrease fraud by having some kind of system in place where we see that fraud is occurring before we figure it out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M. Jagmeet Singh: Ce projet de loi ne fait rien pour le peuple de l'Ontario. Ce projet de loi est un grand cadeau pour les compagnies d'assurance. C'est un autre exemple de ce gouvernement qui continue d'aider les compagnies au lieu du peuple de l'Ontario.

This law simply takes away more benefits from the people of Ontario. It gets rid of their ability to challenge a decision by the insurance companies. It gets rid of their ability to challenge that in court.

Instead of allowing insurance companies to quickly pay settlements by charging them a 5% interest rate, it reduces that to 1.3%. What it does is encourage insurance companies to not settle, because if you reduce the interest rates that were set, it encourages insurance companies to invest that money and not settle a case.

This is another systemic and systematic way to reduce the benefits that drivers of Ontario get. It encourages insurance companies to delay in settlements, by reducing their interest rates. It encourages insurance companies to deny claims by preventing consumers who are unhappy with a result from challenging it in court. It's simply a big gift to insurance companies and another slap in the face for drivers in Ontario.

Licensing requirements: There's no issue with that. Looking at the tow truck industry, there's no issue with that. But when it comes to the main components of this bill, taking away the FSCO arbitrators—arbitrators who are skilled, who are experienced, who have years and years of knowledge when it comes to arbitration—taking them out of the equation and replacing them with per diem licensed appeal tribunal individuals who have no experience with these types of decisions is not benefitting the people of Ontario at all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I believe that concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka for his reply.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to the members from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and Thornhill, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for their comments.

I will just briefly speak about the comments from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who was talking specifically about road maintenance. That's a huge issue in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka and obviously affects auto insurance rates as well. He said that it wasn't so much that the maintenance contracts are privatized, but the role of MTO in supervising those contracts, and I agree with him on that.

As we were having, in the last two years, all kinds of problems in Parry Sound–Muskoka, and as I dug deeper, I spoke with past MTO supervisors who had done the job for 25 years, and the past companies that had the contract. The difference that I see is that in the old system, MTO decided when salt went on the roads. They had patrollers that patrolled the routes. They had a supervisor with 25 years of experience who would say, "Put salt on the roads now," and MTO paid for it.

The way the new contract works is the private contractor is totally responsible, both for the supervisory role and the cost of putting salt on. So there are actually two things: a lack of experience, I think, out there with some of the new contractors—in our area, it's Carillion that has taken over; it used to be Fowler Construction. But also,

there's a financial incentive not to salt unless you absolutely think it's going to work, because the company is paying for the salt, whereas in the past they didn't pay for it. MTO would direct it and the government paid for it. So it went on, and cost was not a consideration. Safety was the main consideration. I think, personally, that was a better system.

1510

I can certainly say that the last two winters have been—other than hydro rates, that's the second-biggest issue in Parry Sound–Muskoka, and I think it needs to change.

I appreciate the comments from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I call for further debate, I am pleased to recognize that we have with us in the Speaker's gallery today a group of Franco-Ontarians who have been selected by an all-party panel of members to receive the internationally recognized medal of la Francophonie, l'Ordre de la Pléiade. These individuals are being recognized for their outstanding contributions to French-speaking communities in the province. The recipients are Madame Nicole Fortier, Madame Élane Legault, le juge Ronald Marion, Germaine Paquette, Paul-François Sylvestre and Denis Vaillancourt. Please join me in welcoming our honoured guests to Queen's Park. Welcome.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Friends and colleagues, I have an hour, so please sit back and enjoy. I'm going to try to shed some light on this issue. I'm going to spend some time on convincing you of the right way to act. I'm sure the term is very appealing to my colleagues to my right. I'm going to ask you all to really rethink and look at what's going on and what this legislation actually seeks to do.

Let's lay some of the groundwork for my discussion so we can have a bit of a background of where we started from, so we can look at where we're going. No discussion of auto insurance can begin without one very, very important element, with one important fact: a history lesson. In 2010—I've talked about it, time and time again. We have to look at what happened in 2010 because, as the member from Vaughan earlier pointed out, past actions or historic actions are often the best indicators of future performance or future behaviour. Let's look at what happened in the past. We have the evidence. Let's look at it.

In 2010, the Liberal government and, at that time, the finance minister, Mr. Duncan, said, "We're going to assist the insurance companies. We're going to reduce their costs, and that will actually benefit drivers in Ontario because, by reducing the costs for insurance companies, we'll bring down rates." This is what the finance minister said. I'm paraphrasing.

Interjection.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Attorney General will enjoy this. What happened is, in 2010, the Liberal government basically put caps on the amount that insurance companies had to pay out. These caps basically limited the amount of money that the consumer could receive. So the injured party, the people of Ontario that were insured: When they made an insurance claim, this legislative change by the Liberal government limited the amount that they could claim. What it did was single-handedly, with one fell stroke of the pen—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Swoop.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh:—swoop, but actually, stroke of the pen—it resulted in, from 2010 to 2011, a 50% reduction in the statutory accident benefit payouts that the insurance companies were paying out. It reduced it by 50%. It reduced those statutory accident benefit payouts by 70% in the GTA. Just to put that in reference, imagine you're running a company, and one of your major costs—if it's a restaurant, maybe it's the food; if it's the clothing industry, maybe it's the cost of the fabric. One of your major costs in the insurance industry is the amount that you pay out for statutory accident benefits. You reduce those payouts by 50%. It results in billions of dollars of savings for the insurance industry. It takes the loss ratio, which was 89% in 2010, and a combined loss ratio of 113%—basically anything over 100% means the insurance companies are losing money. So a 113.5% combined loss ratio, that actually takes into account a 24.5% expense ratio that the insurance industry—we don't really question how much they're expending, how much their compensation packages are, what their entertainment budget is. So they have a 24.5% expense that's a part of the ratio. We don't look at reducing that. No one's ever talked about reducing that, but we always talk about reducing their loss ratio. Well, their loss ratio did go down. Their loss ratio went down from 89% to 65.4%. These are stats, these are facts and figures that no one is disputing. This is a fact. Their loss ratio went down significantly.

If you look at their expense ratio, it hasn't gone down. They're not cutting the fat, as it were, or they're not slimming what they're paying out to themselves or their own expenses. But when it comes to the loss ratios, they went down significantly. The combined loss ratio for 2011, including their costs, shows that they're not making a loss. In fact, the combined loss ratio is 89.9%. This doesn't include the fact that they have an investment income on top of that.

The insurance industry is in a positive position when it comes to the loss ratios. They're not losing money in that area, and that's in 2011. That has gone on and continued in 2011, 2012 and 2013. They continue to enjoy a situation where they're paying out less than they're taking in. They are taking in much more money than they're paying out. On top of that, they're also enjoying investment income, so they are certainly making a profit. The real question, the real effort that this government should place, is getting a handle on what the true profits are, because that's the debate.

Even the insurance industry themselves released two reports by two different accountants, and they came up with dramatically different figures. One chartered accountant, using the same set of numbers, using different variables, came up with a net loss; the other one came up with a net profit. These were reports commissioned by the Insurance Bureau of Canada themselves. They came up with two startlingly different results. One showed a loss and one showed a profit.

When we look at the raw numbers, we look at the raw facts—what are insurance companies paying out; what are insurance companies taking in—and we look at their investment income—if we look at that for Ontario, they're making significant profits. Out of those significant profits, they should be encouraged through FSCO, through the rate-setting procedures that exist, to reduce their rates. There's enough there simply in the profits that they are making to account for the 15% reduction. There is no need for this continued discussion of taking the costs out of the system to reduce the insurance rates by 15%. That can already happen now.

If you want to reduce the costs in the system, sure, go ahead, that's fine, but let's not reduce those costs on the backs of people, on the backs of the most vulnerable. Let's not do that. That's not acceptable.

What is this bill proposing to do? Let's go over the non-contentious issues in this bill, because there are a couple of non-contentious issues. I'll address those first. I'll give credit for that.

This is Bill 171. The component which addresses a licensing of insurance agents and adjusters—no one is concerned about that. I haven't received any issues or complaints or concerns. Adding a level of accountability for insurance agents and adjusters is completely understandable, acceptable, and that is one of the components of this bill. They would seek to allow the government to set up licences for agents, provide for the issuance, renewal and revocation and suspension of these licences. There's no issue with that.

The repair and storage liens—there are some concerns about the way this will be implemented, but again this is an issue that was raised. There are issues around the component of when a car is taken from an accident scene, towed away and stored, and the costs associated with that, and this bill seeks to address that. That is not contentious.

1520

The licences for service providers—now, health professionals themselves have said they have no issue being regulated. They are professional. They are accountable. They are folks with great reputations at hand. The players, the individuals who are actually defrauding the system or engaging in improper practices, need to be removed. The vast majority of the professional and high-quality individuals who provide health services have no issue with fair, accountable and transparent forms of licensing. So that's not an issue.

The two other components, though, which are of grave concern are the dispute resolution component as well as the pre-judgment interest component.

I initially responded to the Minister of Finance when this bill was first tabled, and I indicated that the report headed by Justice Cunningham made some recommendations around what should happen with the tribunal that deals with the disputes.

I have to give credit to, I would like to say, a courageous and respectable individual. I actually agree with the way that this letter—I received a facsimile, and the way it was signed was: “A concerned citizen and loyal employee of Ontario’s public service.” I want to salute you for taking the time to write this very thorough letter to me. It is filled with tremendous information, and it helps clarify some of the remarks I made before.

When this bill was first presented, I indicated that Justice Cunningham said that there should be a transition for the tribunal into a quasi-judicial tribunal. When I was briefed on it, I spoke to the ministry folks and I said, “Can you explain to me how this transition is going to benefit the consumer?” I was skeptical. I didn’t understand how it would benefit them.

Looking at this submission that I received, it provides a very clear map of how it doesn’t actually benefit the consumer at all. In fact, this transition is going to significantly harm the consumer. It’s going to significantly harm the driver in Ontario. Let me explain why. To clarify, Justice Cunningham indicated that there should be a separation between FSCO as an adjudicator and FSCO as a regulator, and that for that reason there was a necessity to move the dispute resolution system in FSCO to a public sector tribunal. But the arbitrators at FSCO are independent; they are salaried, with stable jobs and with great experience and skills in dealing with these decisions. The suggestion to take those players entirely out of the game, to get rid of those experienced, independent, qualified decision-makers and replace them with per diem arbitrators who don’t have the same level of experience, folks who don’t have the skill set to deal with specific issues around what the arbitrator dealt with around the insurance industry—the Licence Appeal Tribunal is a tribunal that deals with liquor licence violations, driving-related offences. It does not deal with the complex issues around liabilities. It does not deal with the issues around the injured parties, the vulnerable parties who are seeking redress from insurance companies. This is absolutely inadequate. We have highly skilled, experienced, independent decision-makers on one side, and we have the per diem, non-experienced, without the same level of expertise, on the other hand, to make decisions that will affect the lives, literally, of some of the most vulnerable people in our society, those who have been injured in car accidents.

Some points to be considered: There has been no evidentiary basis that shows that moving the dispute resolution system in FSCO to the Licence Appeal Tribunal will actually result in a cost savings. There’s no evidence. The government has not provided any evidence

to show that there’s a cost savings—not that there’s a cost savings at all—let alone how much there would be in terms of cost savings.

You could save some money if the dispute resolution system was streamlined, but that didn’t require it to be taken out of the FSCO mandate or to take away those skilled arbitrators. That wasn’t necessary at all.

I think this issue was put very well by Alan Shanoff on March 15, 2014, in an article written for the Toronto Sun entitled “Little Benefit for Victims.” He summarizes his response to Bill 171, Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act.

Now, I challenge the Liberal government, I challenge the members on the other side, to show me how this bill, particularly the two components I talked about—how will changing the dispute resolution system from the FSCO arbitrators to the Licence Appeal Tribunal reduce fraud? It won’t. I dare you to show me how it will. You can’t show that. So your title that says “Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act” in that regard is false. I challenge you to show me how reducing the interest rates charged to encourage insurance companies to settle quicker—reducing them from 5% to 1.3%—reduces fraud in any way. I challenge you to show me how that reduces fraud. You won’t be able to show me that. Again, the title “Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act” is false in those two areas, and those are the two biggest components of this bill.

Now, the article written by Mr. Shanoff was quite to the point, and I love the way he summarized this issue. In his final summary of this issue of Bill 171, he writes, “I can see where reduction of interest rates, removal of special awards and shunting cases away from experienced, independent arbitrators would benefit insurance companies.

“But where is the benefit to drivers and accident victims?” I agree wholeheartedly.

One other component that this bill will do—and people haven’t spoken about it. There is a special award that is allowed, that is rarely used, but it’s a tool that if the insurance industry, if the companies are wrongfully denying a claim—so I make a claim, and I’m entitled to a certain amount of coverage and protection. I’m entitled to a certain amount of money. I file for my claim. The arbitrator sees that I’m meritorious; I’m right. The arbitrator has the ability to send a clear message denouncing the insurance company that is withholding—wrongfully withholding—payment that I am entitled to. There’s a special award which allows a lump sum payment, and this is a tool that basically encourages the insurance companies to act more fairly. Though it’s rarely used, it’s a strong tool that sends a message that there is a tool available if you are acting egregiously, if you’re acting improperly, so if you can establish that you were entitled to payment and the insurance company is withholding that, you can be awarded this. There’s a special award. This bill, Bill 171, gets rid of that.

Now, again, I challenge the government to show me how getting rid of the special award reduces fraud in any way. It does not. Again, I challenge you to show me how it reduces fraud. I assure you that you will not be able to show me how it reduces fraud. Again, the title of your bill is false.

One other component of this bill that is startling and concerning, and I'm sure the member from Elgin—Middlesex will agree with me, is that the Justice Cunningham report came out, and within two weeks of the release of the report, the government jumped on putting out legislation that would address the Cunningham report, without any consultation—without any kind of consultation with the experts in the field—and without any proof or evidence that the steps taken in this bill will actually reduce the costs, will actually address fraud.

1530

I can assure you that Justice Cunningham did not anticipate, in his report, that this government would take away skilled, experienced arbitrators in favour of those who do not have the same level of skill, who do not have the same level of experience, and who do not have the expertise in this area of law. I assure you that was not Justice Cunningham's intention.

I started off my remarks with the 2010 reduction to benefits that we received. We all agree, and there's no denying, that the insurance companies have seen a dramatic reduction in their costs. It's in the billions, industry-wide—billions of dollars of savings. On top of that, we hear the word "fraud" thrown around all the time.

I want to make this very clear: When you reduce the amount that someone can claim, when you put a cap on it, when you put a cap such that 80% of people injured in Ontario are funnelled into the MIG guideline, the minor injury guideline—so 80% of the people only have access to \$3,500. If that's the case, you've gotten rid of a whole segment of people who are actually legitimately injured, who don't have access to the \$100,000 they used to have access to. So legitimately injured people are not getting coverage, but also, all of the fraudulent cases which the government and the insurance industry used to talk about—a vast majority of them are also stopped because they don't have access to that either.

By capping the amount that people can receive, you've cut the legs off of legitimately injured people who are not able to receive coverage, but you've also gotten rid of fraud. In fact, you've gotten rid of costs much more than you would have ever gotten rid of if you had just tackled fraud alone—and it's impossible to get rid of all fraud. So what did we get from that? What did we gain from that colossal reduction of both fraud and legitimately injured folks' coverage we received from 2010 to 2013? You would expect a decrease in insurance rates, I am assuming. No, you didn't see that. You saw an increase. You saw a net increase in insurance rates despite the fact that we got less.

It's like you paid \$15 for a movie ticket, and that same movie that would cost you \$15, you got to watch half the movie. And instead of reducing the rate of the movie

ticket—because you're getting less coverage, you're getting less of the movie, so you thought, "Okay, maybe I'll pay less than \$15." Well, what actually happened is they raised the rate of the movie ticket to \$17: "There you go. Thank you very much. Here is your \$17 movie ticket," and you still get only half the movie. That's what happened to drivers in Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The member from Windsor—Tecumseh says it's not fair. It's not fair, absolutely not fair.

Let's talk about the interest rate issue. Again, what I'm framing is, this entire bill—the two first components do nothing to reduce fraud. They don't tackle fraud in any way whatsoever. They are another example of this Liberal government kowtowing and benefiting insurance companies without any strings attached. This bill doesn't say that if we implement steps 1 and 2, it will reduce costs by X amount of dollars, which will reduce premiums by another 5% or 10%. There's no connection between the cost reduction and the premium reduction. There's no connection in this bill.

The interest rate argument: Right now, the current rate is set at 5%. Bill 171 would reduce this 5% to 1.3% and allow it to be modified quarterly. What does this do? Well, if the rate is set to 5%, that means that if I'm injured and I commence a lawsuit against the insurance company, the insurance company knows that while it's taking time to settle the case, they will be charged a 5% interest rate. A high interest rate: What would that encourage? That would encourage insurance companies to settle quicker because they know that they're amassing a 5% interest rate on the amount that's due. So if it turns out that they lose a case—the plaintiff wins; the injured party is entitled to receive a benefit and they will receive interest on top of the benefit—that tells the insurance companies, "Hey, maybe we should settle quicker. Maybe, if it looks like we've wrongfully withheld money from an injured person and this injured person deserves this, is entitled to this coverage, is entitled to this settlement, we should just settle with them quicker."

What does reducing that interest rate do? If you know that before you had to pay a 5% interest rate—now you're a business. Imagine that you're the business and now your interest rate is only 1.3%. Will you settle quicker? No; you're going to settle slower now because it's 1.3%.

Ms. Catherine Fife: There's no incentive.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: There's no incentive to settle quicker. This is another example of allowing the insurance industry to delay. They actually make money on delaying. They can take the amount of the settlement, if it's a \$100,000 settlement or a \$400,000 settlement—whatever the settlement is, they can take that money and reinvest it and make more money. It actually benefits them to delay it. How does this reduce fraud? How does this benefit the drivers of Ontario?

We heard members of the Liberal government get up today and say that this is going to benefit their constitu-

ents. No, it's not. This is not going to benefit the constituents. I'm challenging you. I'm looking forward to you proving me wrong. I challenge you to show me how these two components—how reducing the interest rates is going to benefit drivers in any way, one; two, how is it going to reduce fraud? It's not going to reduce fraud. I challenge you to show me how it's going to reduce fraud. Anyone on the other side: I challenge you to show me how it's going to reduce fraud. It's not going to—

Interjection.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I challenge you to show me how getting rid of experienced arbitrators who are independent, who are salaried—getting rid of them and replacing them with the Licence Appeal Tribunal, with no expertise—

Hon. John Gerretsen: So you disagree with Justice Cunningham, then?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: That's a great point. The Attorney General raises a great point. Justice Cunningham said very clearly that getting rid of the adjudicator and the regulator component of FSCO was important because there is a bit of a conflict there. There's a regulator on one side and an adjudicator on the other side. Justice Cunningham did not say, though, that you should replace experienced, qualified, salaried, independent decision-makers with per diem, inexperienced folks without the expertise. That's not what Justice Cunningham did. I assure you that Justice Cunningham did not want this to happen. I assure you that Justice Cunningham would have liked to have seen those same arbitrators who are qualified, who are experienced, transition to a separate public tribunal, sure, but not a tribunal like the Licence Appeal Tribunal, which deals with liquor licence violations, with licence revocations, and has absolutely no experience with insurance law and the claims that people are dealing with. That's not what their expertise is. They're very talented and experienced in another area, but not in this area.

This does not benefit the consumer. In fact, you have folks who are less experienced dealing with decisions that are going to result in problematic decisions for the consumer. We already see a hostility towards the insurance companies' denying claims, delaying payments, delaying settlements. This is only increasing that climate: increasing that anti-driver, anti-consumer climate that already permeates the insurance regime.

We've looked at the two major proposals. I've challenged you to show me, and I'm hoping to hear your responses on how this will reduce fraud and how it will reduce costs.

I also want to make one point very clear. The government has talked about the 5% reduction that has occurred. They said that there's a 5% reduction in auto insurance rates. I want to draw attention to that. FSCO provides an outline of all the insurance companies that are submitting reductions in their rates, and we can see it. It gives us an ability to assess: Was there or was there not a 5% reduction, as the government has claimed?

1540

The government claimed that a 5% reduction has occurred. I'm going to list some of the reductions that actually have occurred.

Economical Mutual Insurance Co. has indicated a rate change of 0.98%—that's a 1% reduction; that's good—and that the effective time of that reduction was December 31, 2013. So it has occurred. When they say that a reduction of 1% for that company has occurred, that's correct; it has occurred.

Another example would be the Dominion of Canada General Insurance Co.—this is, again, off the FSCO website. The Dominion of Canada General Insurance Co. saw another approximately 1% reduction, and the effective reduction was between January 1, 2014, and February 2014. That also occurred.

The major reductions, though—for some reason, the government announced them now, saying there was a 5% reduction. Allstate Insurance Co. of Canada indicates a 14% reduction, which is quite significant. However, the effective date will be May 2014 and July 2014, so not for months down the road. However, the government had said the reductions have happened now. Somehow, they've indicated reductions that they're anticipating in the future.

When we talk about the 5% reduction, many of the major reductions, like a 10% reduction for Economical Mutual Insurance Co.—the major reduction that they filed for, again, is not going to actually be effective until May 2014. Many of the other major reductions aren't happening until the summer: a 14% reduction for Pafco and a 12% reduction for Pembrige. Many of these reductions aren't happening until July. The government has prematurely said that reductions have occurred when they actually haven't yet.

The reason why I bring this up is, we're seeing the government move so quickly to reduce the costs for insurance companies. Like I said, overnight in 2010, they implemented changes that reduced their costs by 50%. We see that the Justice Cunningham report came out. Two weeks later, they've implemented a bill which will further reduce the costs for insurance companies. However, despite cost reduction after cost reduction for insurance companies and this quick movement, this speedy transition, to reduce costs for insurance companies, for consumers, for drivers in Ontario, the rate changes are happening at such a slow rate. That's what's disturbing. There's a clear priority here: The government has placed insurance companies' profits and costs as a priority and has placed drivers in Ontario as a lower priority and put them as a passing thought.

I'm struggling to look at and understand how the government would respond to this. I want to issue another challenge. I talked about the transition from the arbitrators, from FSCO. I also want to hear why this government seeks to remove—and I notice that there are a number of people on the government side who could respond to this question—the special award component that previously existed.

Reading from Mr. Shanoff's article again, if we're really serious about protecting drivers, Mr. Shanoff writes, "Another real way to protect drivers is to provide arbitrators with the power to penalize insurers that act unreasonably in withholding or delaying penalties." If arbitrators had a tool of that sort, they could use this to send a message to penalize insurers if they're acting unreasonably. This power exists right now.

Mr. Shanoff writes: "Actually, arbitrators hearing accident benefit cases currently have that power under the Insurance Act.

"They can award a lump sum of up to 50% of the amount withheld or delayed, along with interest, at the rate of 2% compounded monthly."

I ask the government again to explain—Bill 171 eliminates this power, gets rid of this ability for the arbitrator to penalize an insurer if they're withholding a sum or a settlement—how getting rid of this power, getting rid of this ability to penalize the insurers for acting inappropriately, for acting unreasonably, in any way reduces fraud. How does getting rid of this power in any way protect consumers?

As some of the members of the Liberal government have said, "How does this assist your constituents? How does this benefit drivers in Ontario?" I challenge you to answer any of those questions, because I know that if you think this through, you'll find that it does not benefit drivers, that getting rid of a power given to an arbitrator who is an independent decision-maker, allowing them to penalize an insurer who is acting unreasonably—that seems like an appropriate tool. It existed because it allowed arbitrators to send a message, that if an insurer is acting inappropriately or acting unreasonably, if they're withholding payments they should be paying, we have a tool to penalize them, to force them to pay a lump sum.

How would getting rid of that power reduce fraud? It doesn't. How does getting rid of that power given to an independent arbitrator reduce auto insurance rates? It doesn't. It was simply an amount that the insured person was entitled to, and it gives the arbitrator an ability to award a lump sum. How is that reducing the rates, by getting rid of that power?

What it does do is that it favours insurance companies, again. It encourages them to act unreasonably. It encourages them to withhold payment. It encourages them to deny rightful claims. That's what it does. If that's your intention, then you should say that. You should say, "Our intention is to discourage the drivers from suing insurance companies. Our intention is to discourage the consumer from seeking to get what's rightfully theirs. Our intention is to make sure that the already imbalanced system is further imbalanced so that insurance companies have more power than the insured parties, that drivers in Ontario are further relegated to a lower priority." If that's your intention, just say it, and then I wouldn't really have much to say. I'd say, "You know what? You're achieving your intention, then; congratulations."

But when you say that your goal is to reduce fraud, this does not reduce fraud. This does not benefit the

driver. This does not reduce insurance rates. This certainly will increase their profits. This will certainly reduce the cost for insurance companies. If that's your goal, just say so, and I would say, "Congratulations again; you have achieved your goal."

I've been comparing and contrasting the FSCO arbitrators with the Licence Appeal Tribunal. I have no issue with the Licence Appeal Tribunal. They do great work in the area that they are working in. They are hard-working individuals who do their jobs in a professional and appropriate manner. However, let's look at what their jobs are.

Currently, the members of the Licence Appeal Tribunal are part-time, other than the associate chair. They are appointed for temporary terms and they receive per diem rates, and are government appointees. Reappointment is at the pleasure of the Ontario cabinet. If you contrast that with the FSCO arbitrators, they are full-time, they are unionized, public sector employees, they are seen to be independent, and they're respected.

We all know—and I look to the Attorney General for this—one of the elements of why our justice system works is that we decided that those who make the decisions should enjoy a level of independence. It's one of the hallmarks of our justice system, that a judge, when applying the law of the land—for example, the charter—should be free from the whims of the public when it comes to emotional responses to a particular case and instead should apply the law in a fair and rational and just manner, without being swayed by newspaper headlines and without being swayed arbitrarily. They should employ jurisprudence and they should employ thoughtful, rational discussion in coming up with their decisions.

1550

Replacing full-time, unionized public sector employees, who are independent and respected, as the decision-makers for serious cases involving significant sums of money that would impact the lives of people who are injured—replacing those arbitrators with people who are part-time, who are per diem, temporary, and who are government appointees, whose reappointment is at the pleasure of the Ontario cabinet, means that decision-makers are now—if their decisions, for example, are in favour of the consumer too much, well, they are appointments. They could no longer be appointed. Their independence is questionable.

Interjection: Conspiracy theory.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Their transparency—as opposed to a conspiracy—is questionable.

The issue is that we have already independent decision-makers who exist and are being replaced by people whose independence is not as strong.

Interjections.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: You know what's funny? It's true: When you strike a chord, there is a potential that what you're saying is truthful when it hurts. My mom actually has a saying, and I love her saying because it annoys me so much. Whenever she says something that bothers me, and she can see it in my face, she says, "The

truth hurts, doesn't it?" It's true, the truth does hurt. I guess I'm going to give you my mom's adage: The truth hurts.

In all seriousness, we see all too often in the insurance regime that it's getting harder and harder for drivers to get their settlements. We see insurance companies denying their payments. We see drivers getting denied their payments. We see people wrongfully being placed into the MIG guidelines when they shouldn't be. We see this climate get harder and harder for the insured party, for the drivers in Ontario, to get their settlements. We see more and more laws made in favour of insurance companies. It's a trend. It's a trend that this government started in 2010, and it's continuing.

Interjections.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I look forward to some responses to my comments here today. I look forward to some discussion. I look forward to answering them in my questions and comments.

What do I propose here? This is what I propose. The government has accepted this, and has commissioned a committee that will look at the profitability of the industry. Because that's really what's at the heart of this problem. If you had conclusive evidence that the insurance industry was making record profits, record return on equity, you would have, I would hope, at that point, the evidence and the conviction and perhaps the fortitude to then ensure that those profits were then passed on to drivers. The problem is, right now, even those profits are in dispute. Evidence which we clearly see is being disputed, because the industry is saying that they're not enjoying the profits that we know they are enjoying. They are claiming that due to reserves and due to other factors, they're not seeing a profit.

Let's make it clear. We are here as legislators to determine the auto insurance rates set in Ontario. Losses that the insurance industry faces from losses in Alberta, from tragic incidences across Ontario, though troubling for the insurance industry are not our concern as legislators or as regulators. We are regulating a product. The product is auto insurance in Ontario. The reason why we are regulating that product is because, in Ontario, auto insurance is mandatory. The government has made the product mandatory. You have to go out and buy this product, so the government has a responsibility to make sure that this product is affordable. If the government has that responsibility, they're responsible to know whether the industry that they're regulating is making a profit or not and what that profit is. This government, to date, doesn't have a clear picture of that profit. That's a big problem. How can you seek to regulate an industry if you can't say with confidence what their profits are, on the product and in the jurisdiction that you're regulating? That's the first step.

The government accepts that they need to know this. They struck a committee. I'm asking you to move on that committee, to get that result, to get the profitability forward. That's what we need. Once we have the profitability set—I know that you'll find this. If you have the

right folks on your committee who are doing this job in a measured, independent way, you'll come up with a huge profit for the insurance industry. I know that at their board meetings, when they speak to their stakeholders, they're not talking about a loss. They're saying that in auto insurance in Ontario, they're making a killing, and I'm sure that's what they're saying. Once you see that profits are being made, then you can ensure that you regulate them properly. That's the first step.

Mr. Bill Walker: How many shares are you holding, Mr. Singh?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: If I had any shares in the auto insurance companies, I would be making a killing, too.

Interjection: How many other industries do we do that in?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: That's a great question: "How many other industries do we do that in?" I respond by saying that in this industry, we regulate it because it's government-mandated that you have to have it. You have to purchase auto insurance. The government made a decision—and I think this was a fair decision. If you mandate someone to purchase something in this province, there's a certain obligation by the government to ensure that it's accountable—

Ms. Catherine Fife: And affordable.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: And affordable. I am questioning whether or not FSCO is doing its job in an independent and fair manner. I challenge them to do it better. I challenge this government to do their job better to make sure that the rates are set in a more fair manner.

Another area that I just want to touch on before I wrap up is that when we look at the auto insurance industry as a broad area, there are a number of different folks who are injured in different ways. The most vulnerable people are the catastrophically injured. I was on the committee where we questioned the chair of the anti-fraud task force. I asked him point-blank—and he accepted this—"Do you have any concerns, as the chair of the anti-fraud task force, with fraud in the catastrophically injured category?" Categorically, no, because if you're catastrophically injured, you can't fake that. Those are people who are, tragically, some of the most vulnerable because they are so injured and their losses in terms of their abilities, whether it's physically their loss of limb or their loss in terms of their health, are very tragic, very touching and very real.

I implore this government that, while we can find other ways of looking for cost reductions—and I have no issues with reducing costs—I ask you not to touch those folks who are already so vulnerable, not to reduce their level of coverage and their level of protection, because they are so vulnerable and because we know very well that they are not in any way responsible for any fraud. When it comes to definitions, when it comes to their benefits, those are folks that need to be protected. Any savings or any cost reduction should not be on their backs; any cost reductions should not be on the backs of other drivers in Ontario. We should look for efficiencies. We should reduce other areas of activity that are costing

the insurance industry and costing drivers, but not on the backs of the drivers.

Finally, I really wanted to drive home this point: In all of this, we talk about reducing costs. The industry itself has not received the attention that it should receive. The industry itself has a responsibility in making sure that they run efficiently, that they reduce their own payouts that are improper. If they are paying to a fraudulent health care provider, if it's the insurance company that's writing those cheques, they have a responsibility to make sure they complete their due diligence. Much priority is placed on the reduction of fraud, but far too little attention is placed on the insurance company's own responsibility to reduce that fraud.

1600

So I ask this government and I ask members of this House to look at that as an area of cost savings. Look at their expense ratios and what they're actually using their money on and whether they are using it efficiently or not, and ask them to find their cost reductions.

The 15% reduction that the New Democrats have called for, that I have championed, that my colleagues have fought for, is a matter of fairness. It's a matter of the drivers in Ontario getting what they deserve. They've reduced their benefits. We've reduced the costs of insurance companies. Where is the reduction in premiums, in a meaningful way, for drivers in Ontario?

While we're talking about auto insurance, there are a number of areas of unfairness, and one of the areas I want to touch on before I close is postal code discrimination. Postal code discrimination is a major factor, and I want to just make some clarification on this. There are stark differences between northern Ontario, rural Ontario, southern Ontario—all of the different communities are quite different. The traffic, rates of accidents, costs—everything's different. We understand that.

Mr. Bill Walker: Owen Sound.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Owen Sound is quite different from Bay Street in downtown Toronto.

If you look at the GTA and you're a kilometre north of the 401 or a kilometre south of the 401, there is not a significant difference. The fact that you may live in Brampton, but you work downtown, or you may live downtown, but you work in Scarborough—people move around within the GTA. However, within the GTA, insurance companies have subdivided regions and territories to the point that simply moving about 15 kilometres in one direction within the GTA will result in your rates doubling. That one side of the street and the other side of the street see hundreds of dollars of difference in terms of rates is very troubling.

I ask you to consider this other point. The rates are different in a very troubling way. The communities that are more well off, communities that are wealthier and more well established, actually have lower rates than the communities that are not as well off. What is the reasoning behind this? Some want to say that this is because of more accidents in particular regions, more thefts in particular regions. Well, that's not the reason.

The reason is because of costs. I've asked the insurance industry this very point blank—a very interesting factor. I asked this question to the insurance folks, and they agreed to this. Generally speaking, wealthier folks have other forms of insurance. They have life insurance; they have other benefits. If you have another form of insurance and you're injured, you don't claim your auto insurance first. You claim your other forms of insurance first, and you go to your auto insurance second. So people who are wealthier have other sources of coverage, and they actually cost the insurance companies less, and they agreed to this. I point blank said, "Is this true?" They cost less not because their accidents are less, not because of their higher likelihood of getting more or less injured. They cost them less because they're wealthier, because they have more money and they have other sources of coverage.

If that's the case, and not because you actually have a higher rate of accident, not because you have a higher rate of injury, not because you have any other statistical or evidentiary reasons for your cost, but simply that you cost more because you couldn't afford another form of health insurance, you cost more because you couldn't afford life insurance—if that's the reason why insurance companies are allowed to charge certain regions more, that's absolutely unfair. That's an injustice. That's a travesty. I think that's where the evidence is pointing. If that's the case, then we have done—and the Liberal government has done—a horrible travesty to those folks who are already marginalized, who are already hard up. If that's the case, then there is a serious problem that we need to deal with in this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It has been a pleasure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill 171. I listened to the eloquent remarks made by my colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, and I wanted first to thank him for some of his advocacy work on this particular bill. Also, all of us in this chamber have some issue dealing with auto insurance. I believe that the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, my colleague from Vaughan, spoke eloquently earlier this afternoon about Bill 171.

There are four parts of focus in the bill, if passed; first, transforming the auto insurance disputes resolution, which is, again, very complicated and very challenging, but the piece I want to spend a very short time on is establishing the transition strategy for the licensing of health service providers.

As many of you know, I came from the health care sector before becoming a member of provincial Parliament. If this bill is passed, it will do similar things that we have done dealing with pharmacists—owners of pharmacies must be pharmacists. Again, that will reduce the opportunity for fraud, and this is one thing that is really, really important in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt. We've seen recently that police across On-

tario have charged some health professionals with regard to auto insurance fraud, so we must ensure that those health professionals are held accountable, and through the proposed legislation, Bill 171, we will address this particular issue.

Collectively, we all have a responsibility in this House to ensure some kind of legislation to prevent fraud, but more importantly, out there in the community. So I thank you for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I just want to make a few comments on the recent speech—you've obviously done a lot of work on this file—and also on the previous excellent speech from the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka to kind of kick off the debate. We're getting into this issue. We're now getting serious about it, and I commend the government.

The title of the bill, Bill 171—it leads off in the title by talking about fighting fraud. It is about time that this government and all of us took a serious look at fraud in the insurance industry. We have seen so many companies over the years increase their premiums. At the same time, their profits were going down. Why is that? Why are premiums going up? I know that four or five years ago, the industry—auto alone—lost something like \$390 million. I pin it on waste, inefficiency and outright fraud. We seem to be a bit of a haven in southern Ontario for cheats and fraudsters. Other provinces and states have addressed this issue, so this government did have a choice. They could have dealt with this. They've been at this for 11 years now. We've seen half measures. So I have some hope that this legislation will take us into more of an action step.

I am concerned. I spent a number of years as a director in an insurance company. It was a farm mutual, Norfolk Mutual. We knew our policyholders. In fact, to be a director, you had to be a policyholder. We knew who was high-risk. We knew who the fraudsters were in the community and we were able to make decisions as a board on behalf of our policyholders to do the right thing. I know that so many of the companies—and obviously, this government—are so far removed from the industry that we now see the kind of problems that hopefully this legislation will deal with.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's always a pleasure, actually, to listen to the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton. He knows this file incredibly well and you can tell that he's passionate about actually creating some legislation that will meet the needs of drivers and citizens of this province.

I think that he asked a really good question in his stand-up on Bill 171. He asked, "What is our responsibility as members of provincial Parliament? Who do we work for?" It was a critical piece of his speech because it calls into question, quite honestly, some of the major factors in this piece of legislation.

1610

While there are many good ideas—he also mentioned Justice Cunningham's final report on the dispute resolution system that forms the basis for the legislative changes—there is one glaring deficiency in the proposed new system, and that is denying accident victims access to the courts.

This is one of these key pieces that has always been a major recourse for accident victims. In the name of cost savings to the insurance industry, the government is proposing to wipe out recourse to an independent judicial system that safeguards the fundamental rights of citizens and to replace the courts with a tribunal. I think your mother is right, and I think I'll do a shout-out to your mom, because this raises the hackles of the Liberal government when we raise this issue. We are calling into question—for good reason—removing this safeguard of the citizens of this province. To be sure, if this does move forward to committee, we will be addressing this in earnest.

I want to thank, once again, the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton for addressing the issue of fairness and safety for drivers across the province. I look forward to future debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I used to do a fair amount of litigation work in this field, and I can tell you, under the old system insurance companies could literally bankrupt people by not settling with them when they knew people couldn't afford to take it to court for any length of time.

The statutory benefits that are in place now are a vast improvement over that system. I didn't act for insurance companies; I acted for people that were somehow injured in automobile accident cases. I knew many situations where people settled for a heck of a lot less because, basically, they couldn't afford to wait it out in court. The system that we currently have is much better than that. That's number one.

Number two, I can remember the NDP government that went to the polls one time and talked about public auto insurance. They were going to implement it. Then, of course, when they got in, they didn't quite do that.

The member talked—every time he talked about some good provisions in the bill, he said, "What has that got to do with fraud?" Quite frankly, all of those provisions have nothing to do with fraud. Fraud is a completely separate issue. That is why we are in the process of setting up a unit made up of members of the Ministry of the Attorney General, crown attorneys, and working with police, working with the insurance industry to make sure that those fraudulent situations that you're talking about are being dealt with. That's absolutely necessary, because it's one of the reasons why insurance premiums are as high as they are.

He doesn't like the fact that the arbitration system is going from the arbitrators to the Licence Appeal Tribunal. That's what Justice Cunningham recommended. He

asked them to take a look at it, and he said that it will be a much better and more efficient system.

Look, let's just give this bill second reading as quickly as possible, send it to committee, deal with some of the issues that you brought forward, and let's implement this bill and act quickly, for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: What I want to make very clear is that the Cunningham report speaks about removing the role of the regulator and the adjudicator so that FSCO can't act as both. But what Justice Cunningham did not say is that you should get rid of an independent decision-maker, that you should get rid of experienced decision-makers, that you should get rid of decision-makers who have expertise in a particular field. That's what I'm questioning. (1) There is no evidence that this transition, the way it's laid out in this bill, will actually save us money; (2) there are a lot of questions about how this will actually benefit consumers; and (3) the biggest question is, how do we ensure that the people that are making decisions are going to be independent and experienced and have expertise in the area that matters? That's the concern. That's not what Justice Cunningham wanted. He did not say, "I want inexperienced people without expertise, people who are not independent." I want that to be made very clear.

The comments surrounding the licensing of health professionals: There's no issue with that. Health professionals themselves have said that they don't have a problem with a transparent, accountable and fair licensing process that allows them recourse to decisions, allows them due process. There's no issue with that.

The reason I kept pointing out how this component addresses fraud is because that's what it has been entitled. It has been entitled and referred to as the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act. That's the term. Because it's being called that, I'm questioning how the two major components of this bill reduce fraud in any way. In fact, I didn't hear anyone respond to my challenge that the reduction of insurance rates would actually encourage insurance companies to delay providing a result in a settlement and it would hurt consumers. I have yet to hear a response to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 171. The proposed bill, if passed, addresses a number of measures to protect Ontario consumers, and continues our government's crackdown on auto insurance fraud. It will also, most importantly, reduce the rates of auto insurance across the province.

Bill 171 talks about reducing the abuse and related costs within the auto insurance system, which is a key piece of our government's plan in terms of our cost and rate reduction strategy. In its final report, the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force concluded that auto insur-

ance fraud is substantial and has a major impact in terms of the premiums. Research shows that in 2010 auto insurance fraud amounted to between \$770 million and \$1.6 billion. This is a substantial amount, Mr. Speaker.

If passed, Bill 171 would continue the government's work in terms of combatting auto insurance fraud in four areas:

(1) transforming the auto insurance dispute resolution system to make it more efficient and effective in terms of discouraging fraud and abuse;

(2) establishing a transition strategy to deal with licensed health service providers—which I spoke about a little bit earlier—directly invoicing the auto insurance companies, as a key recommendation from the task force;

(3) modernizing the insurance agent and adjuster disciplinary hearings, which then protect the consumers and build on past changes to enhance the regulator's investigation and enforcement authority; and

(4) providing the authority to address the vehicle storage and related issues identified by the task force.

With my time today, I want to focus on two of these four aspects of the proposed bill. The first piece here deals with the review of the dispute resolution system, as mentioned by my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and others. The Honourable J. Douglas Cunningham, a former Associate Chief Justice of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, reviewed this whole piece, in terms of the system, and provided numerous recommendations on how to improve the auto insurance file.

Furthermore, my colleague from, I believe, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound complained earlier that there was not extensive consultation. Well, I beg to differ, because I know, as a member of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, we travelled across Ontario. I know my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton was with me when we were travelling across Ontario. We heard from constituents across Ontario. They gave numerous recommendations to our standing committee. So there was an extensive consultation process. There were 35 stakeholders' input, written submissions, in-person meetings, as well as the interim report, including a standing committee. The final report was delivered on February 18 with 28 recommendations to transform the dispute resolution system. So, again, for the member opposite to say there was no proper consultation, I beg to differ, and there is proof of that consultation.

The proposed Bill 171 also talks about the numerous recommendations from Mr. Justice Cunningham. If we pass the bill, it will then provide a new framework for the dispute resolution system review, make it more responsible in terms of an existing tribunal administered by the Ministry of the Attorney General—I think the Attorney General talked a little bit more about that earlier—making it more objective, making it more expedient and more efficient and more cost-effective.

1620

I have spoken to numerous constituents in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt who continue to say to me, "These dispute mechanisms can be easily handled. It

shouldn't be so belaboured." Time after time, we heard those complaints in our local constituency office.

The other piece here is that if the dispute resolution system is changed, it would also change the responsibility of FSCO, better known as the Financial Services Commission of Ontario. It would prevent conflict with its role as a regulator of insurance companies, so it would move that role out to a disputes resolution system.

The other piece here that we also want to talk about is, through the proposed legislation, to reduce the cost, because when you're dealing with a dispute mechanism, you want to make sure that both parties—especially the consumers of Ontario—don't get gouged in terms of trying to resolve the problem. It will provide some stability in the long term and also reduce the rates of the premiums.

The piece I also wanted to talk about, in my short time in support of Bill 171, is the whole issue of the anti-fraud measures. If passed, Bill 171 will address the special investigation. It will involve multiple ministries—not just the Ministry of the Attorney General, but also the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Minister Meilleur's ministry. The proposed legislation will allow the government to establish a special investigation and prosecution unit on the serious fraud cases. We heard about those from time to time, first, in terms of the auto insurance fraud. The auto insurance fraud is a part of why the big issue in terms of white collar crime that affects Ontarians across the province, not just in my urban centre riding, but also across the province—in terms of the financial companies, but also the insurance companies. I earlier indicated the potential billions of dollars of cost to the system.

The other piece is that the special unit will have a mandate to tackle serious fraud, including auto insurance fraud, but also some key principles, such as creating the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force that established it would vigorously pursue and prosecute those who are the perpetrators and offenders.

Again, we heard from constituents across Ontario talking to this sector. One of the biggest complaints out there is the tow truck industry. I believe, recently, one of the reporters in the Toronto area talked about the tow truck industry and the fact that we have to address this issue because drivers from across Ontario have been taken to the cleaners. We've got to protect Ontario, especially the drivers, to crack down on the tow truck industry.

We also have to work with the lower-tier governments. Municipalities regulate tow trucks in terms of the licensing. I heard that from time to time in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, constituents consistently telling me that the tow truck companies are gouging them in terms of the so-called different rates. They're right there, right after you get into an accident. There may be three cars involved in an accident but five tow trucks are there trying to help to resolve this issue. Again, we heard from the community, from the constituents.

In January and February of this year, representatives of the tow truck and the storage industry, as well as the leasing, financing and insurance industries, and consumer advocates met to deal with this particular piece: improving tow truck industry oversight. Everybody gets it, because not only was there recent reporting by the local newspaper about this issue, but we are also very concerned about making sure that there is transparency and there's accountability by the sector.

Collectively, this sector knows where we need improvement, not just involving the auto insurance industry but also law enforcement, as well as the municipality, because we know that if this sector is not—through this legislation, it's to address the improvement for all the concerns that we hear every day in our community.

Mr. Speaker, the other piece here—the legislation talks about it, and I mentioned it earlier—is about the vehicle storage concerns. If passed, the proposed legislation will provide authority to reduce the number of days that the storer, meaning the company storing the vehicle, gives notice to owners that they have their vehicle in storage. We hear from time to time in our constituency office that their car has been held hostage in some storage area. That, again, is a concern for each one of us in the Legislature.

Currently, when a vehicle has been damaged in an accident, for example, it may be towed to a facility after the collision. Those who store the vehicle after the accident may begin charging storage fees right away, even though the owner of the vehicle is unaware of that. There is no communication with the company that is storing the vehicle communicating to the vehicle owner about this potential fee. The storer can hold the vehicle, accumulating storage fees up to 60 days, without giving any notices, and we hear concerns about that, Mr. Speaker.

Furthermore, reducing this storage period would prevent abusive storage practices and also reduce the costs to the consumer as well as the auto insurance system. So with the proposed Bill 171, it is helping address the vehicle storage piece.

The last piece of my remarks I want to talk about is regarding consumerism. This bill is no different than the one the Minister of Consumer Services brought to the House and which we recently passed, the wireless bill improving the consumer aspect of Ontarians; making sure that we have progressive legislation improving the lives of every Ontarian. Whether you live in an urban centre or rural area, you will be affected by the auto industry, especially when it comes to fraud. Everybody pays if there is fraud.

I know, as a driver in Ontario, that I myself have been affected by this whole industry. At the end of the day, each one of us in this Legislature, not just as a member of provincial Parliament, drives to and from work or to and from our constituency office, so we have a duty not just to support our constituents out there, but ourselves. We need to lead by example.

I'm really encouraging each one of us to move this legislation forward. I know there will be more comments

made in this second reading debate, but I hope we won't belabour this debate and conversation here in the chamber, so that this bill can go down the road shortly, go through committee and we can have further conversation.

I would like to conclude my remarks by thanking my colleague from Vaughan, the parliamentary assistant to the minister, for speaking so eloquently; and as well my colleague from Brampton West, because he has been a champion on this whole issue of fraud, fraud in his community, time and time again. Finally we are proposing legislation that will have a huge impact in the 107 ridings across Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's good to stand up and give comments to the member opposite.

We were talking about the need for this legislation. I was talking to a colleague here about how the government has been bringing this up for years, and I see that they rushed this through in 10 short years. It's good that they're working on this. I think it has been across the industry that there's been a huge fraud problem, and we needed a solution. So we're glad to see this done. We need some amendments made to this that will make it work. We need to bring it through so that we can actually get it to the people with some amendments, as I said.

We look at the way insurance has gone over the years; it was an election commitment when they actually got elected in 2003. It was a huge issue. They promised to freeze rates at that time, and I guess I would like to go back to those frozen rates if they actually had followed through, because insurance has more than doubled and tripled since those times. I think as somebody talked about today, we do have the highest insurance rates in North America. That's a common theme across this government and across this province, that we have high fees to do business here, to operate and live here; high energy rates, high property taxes.

It's always nice to be in first place on things that really matter and actually benefit you, but when you're in first place with your expenses, it just means that you're likely not going to be in first place for the job because businesses have to survive in this province, and we're seeing the trend where they're actually disappearing and going south to our neighbours or east and west to Quebec or Manitoba. We think that times need to be changed—finally, something on the insurance rates. We'll see what happens with the legislation.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I appreciate the comments from the member from Scarborough—Agincourt, who is always very amicable and collegial. I appreciate that. It's a pleasure.

Interjection.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: A great person; it's true.

But there is a time and place—and I think it's an important place—to have moments where we can work

together. Though there is a healthy discourse that comes from opposition, there's also a great growth that we can have when we're together.

I agree with the member's comments with respect to the licensing component and the tow truck industry, particularly when it comes to storage, where this bill strives to address the issues of storage and some of the problems around the inappropriate fees that are charged and the costs associated with the storage that can drive up the costs, both for insurance companies and premiums. That is something that's important, and the health care component is important.

But again, I really want to raise this issue: I don't think you should take this bill, as is being passed, for granted because there are significant problems with—it's not something that it's simple dealing with it at the committee stage. I'm suggesting that there are serious problems and flaws with this bill that would make it fatal in the sense of its ability to be passed. I question whether it should be passed at all, given the fact that it undermines, in my opinion, some of the accountability and some of the transparency and some of the incentive for the insurance companies to settle cases by reducing and removing the interest rate that is harmful for consumers and not beneficial for getting cases settled. The dispute resolution mechanism, as laid out, is not an improvement, and it needs a great deal of work before it's something that I think we could support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to commend the member. She has made a very good address to this House and pointed out the virtues of this legislation. We've already taken certain steps, of course, but this legislation has further steps to bring about conditions where the premiums that are charged in the province can be lowered. We're in the process of doing that.

I remember there was an NDP staffer who, at one time—I know that the political people don't necessarily say that, but it was revealing—was somewhat complimentary of the government and said that the government was living up to its commitment. I agreed with him entirely on that.

The member should know—I'm glad to hear he supports many parts of this particular legislation. This is never an easy topic, because when there are no claims—obviously, it's easy when there are no claims. Can you imagine what's going to happen when the bills start coming in for floods and other climatic occurrences that have happened in the province and that starts having huge claims being paid out? So we've got to watch that.

But what I really want—and the member didn't have a chance to say this. I was wondering where the NDP stands on public auto insurance, because for years, whenever I was in a campaign sitting beside an NDP candidate, they would talk about public auto insurance.

My friend from Beaches—East York, who has yet to get a question in question period—and I want him to get a question, so I hope it's tomorrow or the next day. He

would remember that one of the virtues of the NDP, something that the NDP stood on at all times, was public auto insurance. There's not even a whisper of it now, as we have the new NDP, which has switched from being a left-wing party to almost a right-wing, populist party. I'd be very interested in knowing where the member stands on public auto insurance, as his party did for so long.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I don't even know where to start after the Minister of the Environment just gave us that little bit of humour. It's always a pleasure to hear him speak, and his colleague from Scarborough as well. I'm going to take most of my comments back to the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, who, I believe, actually brought some good thought to this debate.

At the end of the day, there are lots of things typical of a Liberal bill here. The sound bite went across very well: "We're going to lower your rates by 15%." Of course, the NDP supported that wholeheartedly, with no thought process as to how it was truly going to happen.

The Minister of the Environment does raise a good thought: Where do they stand today? Are they going to flip or are they going to flop? The challenge is it's both ways. It goes to the left—either way, they flip or they flop. There's never going to be that right-wing. I'm not certain where you saw that, Minister.

Everybody wants lower rates. Everybody wants better licensing. Everybody wants to know that the tow truck side of things is being handled the way it should be.

Dispute resolution—I actually read in my notes that they took it from 30,000 cases to 16,000 cases. That's the only number I can think of that has actually gone down under the Liberal terms instead of up. The debt and the deficit are certainly—

Interjection: Their seats.

Mr. Bill Walker: Their seats have gone down a little bit. You are correct there. There's a couple that are actually trending in the right row—and, of course fraud, Mr. Speaker.

Our critic, Mr. Yurek from Elgin-Middlesex-London, has done outstanding work on this file. He has made sure our caucus has been informed. He has been spending a lot of time on this file.

I think the insurance companies generally—I have two mutuals that serve our great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound: Germania and Trillium. I've spoken to those representatives, and there are pieces of this bill that are actually making sense and moving forward. But at the end of the day, there need to be some significant amendments to ensure that it truly is a benefit to the persons who are paying the claims. That is our job. We will sit down with them, unlike the Liberals, who did not consult the industry prior to making this—yet again—announcement. So we'll work with that. We'll try to amend, and generally we'll try to support it so there are fair insurance rates for all involved.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have this afternoon for questions and

comments in this round. I return to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt for her reply.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to thank my colleagues from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry and Bramalea-Gore-Malton, the Minister of the Environment, and the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, as we try to bring this bill forward for this second reading debate, we all need to remember that we here represent our constituents, the consumers of Ontario. This bill is no different than what we just passed on the whole issue of cellphones. Remember the cellphone bill we just passed? This is what it's all about. How do we insure and support Ontarians everywhere? This is not just an urban issue. It's not a rural issue. This is an Ontario issue, across Ontario. We need to tackle these frauds that are affecting each one of us, as legislators but also as consumers, because each one of us drives. Our families drive. This is what this bill is about.

We know that there's going to be conversation about how to improve the bill. We also know that we need much-needed legislation and measures to improve consumer protection, reduce the cost and, most importantly, provide some certainty to everybody in Ontario. We need to strengthen what we have right now on the auto insurance file.

I really encourage each one of us to be respectful in our conversation in the chamber right now, in terms of second reading debate, and I really think we should consider going to committee shortly, like the Attorney General talked about earlier.

Again, I want to thank all the members who have spoken in the discussion of Bill 171.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I intend to try to take the full hour here as we talk about Bill 171.

This bill is just a long continuation of a drawn-out soap opera of auto insurance in the history of Ontario. Whenever there is an election coming up, auto insurance becomes a huge concern and we come out with some legislation. It has caused, over the years, lots of bureaucracy and lots of legislation piled on top of one another. It's making the system too complicated and, in the end, very costly. In fact, we now have the highest auto insurance rates in our country.

I'm going to go over a little bit of the timeline of auto insurance before I get into the meat of the bill. In 1914—let's go all the way back to a hundred years ago—auto insurance was added to the Insurance Act, but at that time it was not compulsory.

In 1932, minimum third-party liability limits were introduced. Anyone who buys auto insurance has to buy that minimum coverage, just to protect them in case they were sued. That, in 1932, was the first version of compulsory coverage.

1640

Travel up to 1972 and we have policies that we have to have, no-fault benefits for loss of income, medical and

rehab expenses that aren't covered by OHIP; 1972 was the first no-fault coverage in place in the insurance industry.

In 1980, the Minister of the Environment was finally here in the Legislature. Auto insurance becomes compulsory for all vehicle owners in Ontario. It has now essentially become a tax for Ontarians because they all have to purchase auto insurance.

In 1985, there was a crisis of auto insurance availability and affordability. Rising bodily injury claims was blamed.

In 1988, Bill 2 created the Automobile Insurance Board, with a mandate to conduct hearings on auto rates.

In 1990, Bill 68 by the Liberal government entrenches no-fault benefits.

In 1991, the NDP abandoned plans to create public auto insurance.

In 1994, the same government's Bill 164 includes additional no-fault benefits, making the product richer and richer.

In 1996, the PC government introduces legislation to try to simplify the product, to make the system less costly.

In 2003, the Liberals introduced a freeze on rates because big industry losses were about to cause big increases, and it's the first example of this Liberal government meddling in private industry.

In 2004, a white paper was released saying people with employment insurance should be able to opt out of some mandatory coverage; therefore, they're not being covered twice. This white paper went nowhere—again, another history of this government's inaction on certain reports.

In 2010, they released major reforms to coverage.

The end result, over these last 100 years: We have a system that is very complex and very costly and has created tons of bureaucracy and regulation, till we get to this point today.

Last year, at the budget, we had the 15% reduction promise by this government, propped up by the NDP in order to prevent an election. Time and time again, the NDP say they want to make this Legislature work on their behalf, but unfortunately, the mandate of this government ended in 2012, when their leader resigned from this Legislature. The leader who replaced him in 2013, Premier Wynne, does not have a mandate from the people. I know it's difficult for the NDP to notice there's a difference in the government, because Premier McGuinty and Premier Wynne are pretty much the same person. There are the same issues going across, the same laws, the same regulations. It's hard to tell the difference. However, it is a change of leadership and an end to their mandate, and I would have to question the NDP and their leadership if they were to prop up this government again. The leadership actually that should be reviewed, if there is another prop-up after this budget, of course would be the leader of the third party.

But we've said for a long time that a unilateral cut to insurance rates without cost savings in the system would

lead to unintended and negative consequences, and we're seeing evidence of this now on two fronts over the last year: number one, availability of insurance. Late last year, State Farm sold its property and casualty business in Canada. They cited the Ontario auto insurance market as a key reason for this. This is a bad trend. New Jersey tried this. They promised to cut rates by 15% in 1998. Numerous companies left the market at the time, making auto insurance very difficult to obtain. While rates did come down by 15% over two years, the lack of availability led to a spike of 27% in their premiums by 2000, two years later.

Further, we're starting to hear from various constituency offices that people with few blemishes on their record are being dropped by their insurance carriers. Insurance carriers cannot drop a client during their policy, but they can refuse to renew a policy. I've had numerous constituents in my office telling me that they're being forced to search elsewhere because their insurers will not cover them for another year, even though they've had no blemishes on their record. And in an offshoot, and I have no idea if it's related or not, we are seeing home insurance prices start to creep up. I don't know if this 15% cut is causing the business to have to readjust its loss savings and it's affecting other insurance products on the market.

But I do want to give you a quote from Philip Howell, CEO of FSCO, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, at the Standing Committee on General Government, April 15, 2013. This is Phil Howell. He's been at this a long time. He's the chief of the regulator of our province on insurance.

Phil Howell says, "So any move that required all companies to cut rates I think would be a very dangerous move. As well as that, I think you would find situations where people would just have less access to insurance and perhaps be forced into" the Facility Association, "paying much higher rates than they currently are"—forewarned by the chief regulator of our province on insurance. But instead, the discount was passed in the last budget.

The second problem we're seeing from this past budget's 15% rate cut that they promised is bad drivers are getting the biggest discounts. In the most recent rate filings in January, the biggest winners were those insured by non-standard insurers. These companies insure the worst drivers, including those with multiple accidents and drinking-and-driving convictions. The non-standard companies, and their respective rate reductions, were as follows: Perth Insurance, a 15% rate decrease; Pafco Insurance, a 14.5% rate decrease; Echelon General Insurance, an 8.7% decrease.

Mr. Speaker, I have a constituent who came to see me last week, during our break week, to show me his bill. His insurance has gone up 43% from last year. It started April 1 this year. There was no reason given. He had no tickets; he had no accidents—nothing. His rates went up 43%. Under this cut, between the Liberals and the NDPs last year, that gave drunk drivers a 15% rate cut, a good

driver in my riding had rates upped by 43%, and that is wrong.

Mr. Bill Walker: Did the NDP vote for that last budget?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: The NDP propped them up.

I know I haven't talked much on topic, Mr. Speaker, but I'm going to do it right now. I'm going to go to Bill 171 and, hopefully, get to the meat of what's going on in this bill.

I'll just be clear from the beginning that we will be supporting this bill to second reading into committee, because we think it needs to have some serious amendments looked at. There are certain steps in this bill that we think are right on, but there are a few points in here that we need changed in order to pass it into law.

But we do have to remember that this bill is really only a half measure. As part of this whole disingenuous 15% rate promise from last year, this government—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member to withdraw his unparliamentary comment.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Sorry, Speaker. I withdraw that word. I'm very sorry.

Anyhow, after this rate decrease from last year, the government now has to search for cost savings in the system. The bottom line is, this bill doesn't deliver any significant cost savings at all. Instead, it has been put forward, like many other bills from this government, more as a way to make it seem like they're a government in action.

Let's talk about the specifics of the bill. First of all, I'd like to talk about the changes in the dispute resolution process. To do so, I'll provide a little bit of context over the next little while.

A year and a half ago, as I mentioned, when the NDP at the time were talking about territorial ratings for premiums, and the government wasn't even talking about auto insurance, it was our party that recognized there were ongoing issues with the dispute resolution mechanism. The PC Party was the first to start talking about the issues with dispute resolution, and we in fact addressed some aspects of that in our auto insurance action plan.

We didn't start talking about it because we thought it would get us votes. Very few people know or understand what the dispute resolution process is. Had we wanted to cheaply buy votes, we would have picked a random number out of the air and demanded that the government legislate a premium reduction of that magnitude. That is a tempting approach, but we in the PC Party are averse to cheap populist politics.

I think the fact that we have 14 white papers on file, on issues ranging from social assistance, education, health care, and post-secondary education to energy, demonstrates that we're the only party actually concerned with putting some thought into the difficult issues our province has faced. Believe me, having serious policy discussions on complex issues doesn't grab headlines; it's not the most sexy approach. But we in the PC caucus believe that we were elected to have these difficult conversations, to put in the work to understand the nuance and complex-

ity of these issues. Anything less would be a disservice to the very people who elected us.

So that is why we brought up the dispute resolution mechanism before any other party did. By actually taking the time to speak to accident victims and various other stakeholders, it became clear early on that this aspect of the system was broken.

Then when the Auditor General released his annual report in 2011, the independent evidence supported what we were hearing. In a scathing report, the Auditor General noted that not only was the regulator, FSCO, not meeting its legislative customer service standards; it wasn't even close.

1650

As set out in the Insurance Act, mediation is supposed to be completed within 60 days. So if someone gets in an accident and feels their insurance company is short-changing them, they can initiate a dispute.

The first step of that dispute is to take part in a FSCO-administered mediation process. It is the hope of this process that the insurer and the claimant can agree to some type of mutually agreeable settlement in order to avoid going to the courts or to FSCO-administered arbitration. As I say, this initial process is supposed to be complete within 60 days.

What the Auditor General noted in 2011 is that, due to substantial demand for mediation services, FSCO only had 5% compliance with this timeline; 95% of the cases were not being resolved within 60 days. In fact, most applications at the time were being dealt with 10 to 12 months after initial filings. This had led to a case backlog of more than 36,000 cases.

That is a problem. It is a real problem that requires practical solutions from our government. But did the NDP choose to talk about this? No, they did not. A policy to address this type of issue needs to be written on something more than the back of a napkin.

We talked about it and continued to bring up this issue in the Legislature. Finally, after months of this, the Liberals did agree to review the dispute resolution process. They appointed Justice Cunningham, who has been named a few times today, to review the system and provide recommendations. Over the summer and autumn months of last year, he conducted round tables and received submissions from leading industry experts, and delivered his final report in February.

I've gone through this report a couple of times, and there are aspects that I think are good and other aspects that I think are lacking. Arguably, the biggest change that Bill 171 makes is moving the dispute resolution system out of FSCO's hands into the Licence Appeal Tribunal in the Ministry of the Attorney General, as per the recommendations from Justice Cunningham. I really don't have any objection to this. After all, one can reasonably expect that the Attorney General's office does employ individuals who have backgrounds in dispute settlement and therefore the skills necessary to conduct mediations adequately.

However, if Bill 171 is being introduced with the purpose of reducing costs so the government can deliver premium reductions, I don't think we have it at this point. Certainly, it's worth noting that the insurance regulator FSCO is industry-financed, so moving any administrative function out of FSCO will reduce costs that industry has to pay to FSCO; therefore, it's conceivable that premiums could come down slightly.

However, costs aren't really reduced at all. Now, rather than paying for the dispute resolution system through auto insurance premiums, Ontarians will pay for it through their taxes. So while I concede that there is merit to having the Ministry of the Attorney General overseeing the dispute resolution system, let's not forget that, from a cost perspective—I suppose the goal of the bill is to reduce costs—this is nothing more than a shell game.

One area that I think this bill falls short on is that it makes no mention of the role of private mediation services. Back when FSCO was experiencing its highest backlog of mediation cases, they contracted out to private mediation services to help clear the backlog. Justice Cunningham also recommended using private mediation services to deal with fluctuating demand. Both FSCO and Justice Cunningham stopped short of saying that private mediators should be a viable and permanent alternative. My response is: Why not? Why isn't it an alternative?

The fact that our government institutions have the ability to contract out this service tells me that there are qualified people in the province capable of conducting mediation services. The Alternative Dispute Resolution Institute of Ontario is a non-political body with the aim of developing competent alternative dispute resolution professionals, including accreditation practices and approval of training programs. They provide ADR professionals who are members of the institute with a regulatory structure, including accreditation/certification, a code of ethics, rules of procedure, and complaint and discipline procedures. To this end, they conduct education seminars and ensure that their members are equipped to serve people in alternative dispute resolution sessions. They operate just like professional bodies for an array of other occupations.

So my question becomes: If the capability to conduct mediations in a professional, standardized manner exists, why not make use of it and (1) off-load administration costs from the government and (2) give people a choice in how they wish to pursue their dispute? I know that there would be a bunch of claimants who, if given the option of enlisting a private mediator or waiting over a year to see a government-appointed mediator, would enlist with a private one instead. Nobody wants the dispute to drag out for years, particularly when the dispute deals with medical or rehabilitation care, which is more effective when received in a timely manner.

For these reasons, we recommended in our auto insurance action plan to open up the system to private mediations. From a number of consultations I've had, every mediation session is different. In some cases, it's a lengthy process in which resolution is possible, provided

the mediator can effectively find common ground and bridge the differences between the claimant and the insurer. As I've just outlined, we know there are plenty of qualified individuals capable of doing so. In other cases, it's clear from the start that a case will not be settled without a judge or arbitrator ruling on it. Whether the claimant's demands are unreasonable or the insurer has taken a position it refuses to back off of, in these situations, the impasse is deeply entrenched and both parties know it. In these cases, why should a claimant have to wait for 10 months just so the insurer can officially say no to a settlement in front of a government-provided mediator? It would make more sense to have private mediators available so that both parties can attend the legislatively mandated mediation session within a timely manner and move on with their dispute.

Providing choice and expediting the mediation process has cost-saving implications. These cost savings are rooted in the nature of the insurance business. Insurance, after all, pools money from a large group of individuals to cover the future claims of a few. The whole business is built upon actuarial science, which is the ability to use stats to estimate the expected future value of an event. An event for an insurance company is most often the claim that is paid out. When evaluating the possibility of risk of a policyholder, the insurer will incorporate many statistics to try to effectively determine the expected future payout to that individual. They look at things like an insurer's driving record, where they live, how old they are—we've all heard the typical, familiar things that we get judged upon. But also they need to know the amount of money they typically pay out for claims of a similar nature. That is, the insurer wants to know how much, on average, they pay to someone—we'll give an example of a sprained knee. When a dispute over a claim occurs, the insurer doesn't know how much until the dispute is settled. If it goes all the way to arbitration, the insurer doesn't know how much that particular injury costs until the arbitrator has made the ruling. The longer it takes to receive that ruling, the value of future claims remain uncertain, and uncertainty is one of the most costly aspects within the insurance system. When things aren't certain, insurers hold greater reserves because a dispute that's being resolved could end up costing more than anticipated. When insurers hold greater reserves, there's less money available to deliver savings to premium payers.

It's a concept that businesses have out there: They ensure that if there are savings out there that they want to pass them down to their premium payers. Why do insurers want to have lower costs? Because they'll attract more customers. If they can offer a product of same service for a lower cost, they'll get 10, 20 more customers than, say, if they have a higher cost of a product. But when you have a backlog of 36,000 cases in mediation and no way of knowing the outcome, you're going to have to make sure you have enough money at hand to cover the costs in case arbitrations and mediations increase costs. That is why I've suggested to open up mediation to private service providers. If disputes can be re-

solved more quickly, it reduces uncertainty in the system and therefore reduces costs. In short, I have no problem moving the dispute resolution system to the Ministry of the Attorney General, but it's really a half measure that doesn't go far enough, and it will not really reduce costs.

One change that I'm concerned about is eliminating the option to pursue a dispute in court following mediation. As it stands now, once a dispute moves through the mediation stage without resolution, the claimant and the insurer will get together with respective legal counsel and decide whether to take the case to an arbitrator or to the courts. Bill 171 eliminates the option of the courts. This is in line with Justice Cunningham's recommendation.

The main reason for Justice Cunningham's recommendation is that other tribunals and arbitrators for things like labour relations boards or the WSIB do not have that option. When cases arise, they are resolved through the appropriate mechanisms within each body. However, comparing the WSIB to auto insurance is like comparing apples to oranges. Ontario has a hybrid auto insurance model. It provides both for a tort component, disputes regarding claims of negligence that are handled by the courts, and a no-fault component, which are accident benefits paid regardless of fault.

While a number of disputes that arise are strictly no-fault and would be best served by going through an arbitrator, some cases have both a no-fault and a tort component. Typically, when such a case arises and cannot be resolved in mediation, the claimant and insurer will decide whether to take the case to court or proceed to arbitration. The advantage of this is that it allows them to treat the case as one file. Removing this option, therefore, has a number of implications:

(1) It removes the inherent fairness of allowing a local judge to decide issues in a dispute.

1700

(2) It removes the right to sue for extra contractual damages, leaving such issues strictly in the purview of a tribunal not authorized to deal with equities of the situation.

(3) It causes more rather than less costs by forcing insurers and claimants to fight battles on two fronts rather than one on every case.

(4) Ultimately, it will reduce rather than enhance opportunities to access justice.

I'd like to touch on the cost aspect for one second. This bill proposes that instead of dealing with a dispute with both the tort and no-fault components, people now have to pursue a dispute on two separate fronts. That means two separate files, two separate forums of pursuing the dispute and two separate decisions to be made with respect to the dispute. How can this possibly be more cost-effective and efficient than the current system? It simply cannot be.

Despite Justice Cunningham's contention that in other areas of dispute people do not have a choice of forum, there's a unique connection between the accident benefits claimed in auto insurance and the claims being advanced in tort that get litigated. After all, tort claims can only be

pursued through the courts. Therefore, forcing accident benefits to go to the tribunal and having two concurrent disputes does not make any sense. The current practice of combining those disputes under one suit makes more practical and common sense.

It's worth noting that lawyers on both sides of the dispute agree to this point. Trial lawyers who represent claimants and defendant lawyers who represent insurance companies both recognize that this change is not in the best interest of the system, and that's very key because I haven't had too many issues where both sides, the insurance and the defendant side, are actually on the same page of an issue.

By their very nature, both these groups are in opposition to each other, and it's natural. They constantly represent differing sides of these disputes, but both these stakeholders agree that an option to pursue a dispute as one suit in the courts is better for both the insurer and the claimant. And I don't buy into the argument of Justice Cunningham that says the new tribunal model will settle accident benefits sooner and, therefore, the issuing of two separate disputes openly and concurrently will not be an issue.

As I've already outlined, the government does not have a good track record when it comes to ensuring expeditious resolution of disputes. Demand for mediation will continue to be high, and the government has already dismissed the idea of allowing for private mediators. I think what we're going to have at the end of the day is a lot of the same problems you already have now. It's just that those issues will extend to two forums: the courts and the tribunals.

Before I move on from the issue of dispute resolution, I do want to address something that is completely absent from this bill. Nowhere does this bill attempt to address the high demand for dispute resolution services. Why are we going to dispute resolution continually? Why are so many people wanting to go to dispute resolution?

In his 2011 report, the Auditor General noted that demand for dispute resolution services increased by 135% from 2006 to 2011. Justice Cunningham also made mention of the issue in his report. He stated that the elimination of the designated assessment centres contributed to this progressive increase in demand. The designated assessment centres—or DACs for short—provided neutral, multidisciplinary assessments of treatment requests, attendant care needs, disability and catastrophic impairment.

FSCO was responsible for the administration of the DAC system, which involved issuing assessment guidelines, establishing timelines and standardized reports, reviewing the qualifications of assessors and introducing quality assurance programs.

Certainly, in principle, there are merits to the system. However, the DACs were rightly criticized by almost all stakeholders in the insurance system. I know many in our caucus will not be surprised by this, but these government-run bricks-and-mortar facilities were bureaucratic and ultimately were inefficient and ineffective.

Again, it's important that we recognize that sometimes government just isn't very adept at providing certain services. However, the two other parties in the House seem to think that any problem that arises can and should be addressed by government. Not only does this approach lack imagination, we've seen it fail time and time again. When it comes to issues of medical assessment for those claiming accident benefits through their insurance companies, I think we need to recognize the importance of some of the principles which the DACs were based and founded upon and leverage those existing resources to fulfill those principles. After all, if you can have a system in which approved treatment plans for a claimant are beyond dispute, then you'll end up having fewer cases going through the dispute resolution process. That's why I think it's necessary for us to look at what already exists and what we can make use of.

For instance, the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities is a non-profit accreditor of health and human services. They accredit health providers based on a series on their capabilities and qualities of service. Basically, they are the equivalent of the ISO certification for manufacturing facilities. There are guidelines for assessments, writing treatment plans and quality control measures that must be adhered to in order to obtain accreditation. Best of all, this is a standardized accreditation.

The point I'm trying to make here is that you have an independent body responsible for maintaining the quality and credibility of assessment and rehabilitation services. Considering that many disputes in auto insurance claims arise from conflicts over the appropriate treatment of individual injuries, it would seem that we could somehow make use of an accreditation that already exists and is self-financed, like this one I've mentioned, to inject more certainty into the auto insurance system.

The problem that exists is that when someone gets injured in an automobile accident they go to a medical service provider. The provider assesses the person's injury and recommends a treatment plan. The treatment plan will then be sent to an adjuster who will evaluate it and decide whether it can be covered or not. Generally, when the insurer refuses the treatment plan it's because they think the individual's injury doesn't fall into the classification as stated in the treatment plan. They will employ their own assessor to evaluate the claim, and oftentimes they will come with a different conclusion and a dispute is initiated.

I think most people can see that when you have competing interests here, that leads to divergent medical opinions. That's why I think it's so important to have some type of mutual third-party medical assessment guidelines. If both claimants and insurers were required to use medical assessors that adhered to a standardized set of principles and guidelines, you would see less variance in the assessments and treatment plans, and therefore fewer disputes.

I think something like the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities can help fill this need.

That is why in the PC caucus we have put forward our auto insurance action plan, and I think it's a reasonable measure to begin to reduce the demand that has been placed on our dispute resolution system.

We also went a step further by recommending that second-opinion assessments should be conducted by medical peers; that is, to have a system of peer-to-peer review. So if someone goes to a neurologist for a head injury they sustain, the insurance company should also use a neurologist to conduct their assessments. That way you have specialists in the same area evaluating a person's injury. Again, this helps to minimize the possibility of divergent opinions, thereby reducing disputes.

I believe that that covers off most of what I wanted to say on Bill 171, but I have a lot more to say.

I do want to talk about fraud. It's been coming up off and on. The minister himself during his press conference talked a lot about reducing fraud and using the PCs' idea from the last election of creating a task force of crown attorneys from the Attorney General's office to tackle fraud. I'm glad I heard that. I haven't seen any action on it yet other than that he wants to create a 1-800 number such that if you think someone's calling fraud, call that number.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is this insurance fraud or gas plant fraud?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: We're not touching gas plant fraud today, we're talking about insurance fraud.

The part of the bill that deals with fraud, the little bit that does touch on fraud is dealing with the licensing of health care clinics. Fraudulent health clinics in the GTA have been cited as one of the key drivers of fraud-related costs in the system. Oftentimes these clinics are nothing more than fronts and part of larger fraud rings. Back in August of 2012, Ontario police arrested 65 people who were involved in such a fraud ring. It was quite a sophisticated crime ring. We need to recognize that a lot of this fraud is organized.

The individuals involved had an extensive network. They would stage accidents and set up phony health clinics to overbill insurers for treatment. In many of these cases these individuals recruit people to fill up a vehicle and then stage a minor accident. The occupants of the vehicle are then instructed to go to the phony health clinic where they'll be evaluated and diagnosed with an injury that is much more severe than what they actually have. If the treatment plan gets approved, it essentially becomes a licence to print money. The clinic can use the treatment plan to continue to submit invoice after invoice to the insurer, mostly for treatments that never really ever take place. The impact of activities like this is substantial.

In a report from KPMG that was mentioned earlier, fraud is estimated to range from between \$768 million to \$1.56 billion. When you average that out across Ontario, that's either \$116 to \$236 per premium paid. In the GTA alone, the problem is much more severe. In the anti-fraud task force release a year and a half ago it was noted that 83% of the increase in accident benefit costs in Ontario between 2006 and 2010 occurred in the GTA. This is

over a period of time in which the MTO reported significant decreases in the number of reported vehicle accidents. When accident rates are on the decline, yet the cost of accident benefits continue to increase, you can be sure that there are some questionable practices at play, and so it is necessary to address that issue. If you can, it will reduce costs in the system that will benefit all Ontarians.

1710

The health clinics are certainly an area that needs to be addressed. Recommendations regarding health clinics were included in the anti-fraud task force report, and it's good to finally see that this government is looking into the issue.

What does Bill 171 provide in the way of health clinics? Essentially, the Liberal government wants to create a new licensing machine, to be administered by FSCO, that would pertain to the business practices of health clinics that bill insurers. Many health clinics treat clients for both non-auto and auto-related accidents. Fraud occurs typically on the auto side of things because the statutory benefits are particularly richer than other insurance plans.

We're all familiar with law firms that advertise on TV. They almost always talk about fighting for the clients over auto-related accidents. Rarely is it anything else. This speaks to the richness and potential windfall that can be attained through an auto claim. Recognizing this is a problem, the industry got together with the regulator, FSCO, a couple of years ago and developed and implemented an electronic billing system for health clinics that bills insurers. This system is known as Health Claims for Auto Insurance, or HCAI for short, and allows health clinics to bill insurers electronically for pre-approved treatments. It's a good initiative, one that I feel deserves to be more fully utilized.

Currently, the capabilities of HCAI are limited. This is due in large part to the regulatory burden on FSCO's end of things. But the potential for the HCAI system is truly great. By processing all the invoices and billing between health clinics' insurers electronically, a large amount of data becomes available that can be used in a constructive manner. For instance, if a health clinic bills an insurer 10 times in one month for something like a sprained ankle, this would indicate abnormal billing. It then becomes possible to follow up in this health clinic to find out why the billing frequency for something so minor is so high. Through this very simple process, it becomes possible to detect and weed out fraudulent clinics.

The best part about the HCAI system is, should a health care clinic be conducting itself fraudulently, its ability to bill insurers can be cut off. That, essentially, is the built-in fail-safe.

We've long advocated for a broader and fuller implementation of the system because it provides an effective means of oversight. Certainly, this tool can and should be a key one as we move forward in eliminating fraudulent behaviour in the auto insurance system.

I'm just going to return back to what's proposed in Bill 171. As I said, this bill wants to institute an entirely

new licensing scheme for health care clinics. Although it is a recommendation in the anti-fraud task force report, I do view this proposal with some reservations. As I've outlined so far, there are far too many examples of government piling regulation on top of regulation and in creating administrative bodies to serve the need of that. In many cases, all these additional levels of government fail because of the costs and hassle of bureaucracy become so overwhelming that they outweigh the benefits that these initiatives initially created.

If we think about this for a second, although their impact is large, fraudulent health clinics make up a relatively small portion of the businesses that provide health services. This means that the costs and burdens of new licensing schemes will be borne by honest, hard-working small and medium-size business owners. After all, a lot of these clinics service clients with auto-related injuries and non-auto-related injuries.

When we consider a clinic that must now get a licence so it can bill insurers, it becomes more burdensome to manage than all the other aspects of the business. So while I don't disagree with the intent of this measure, I'm concerned that, when all is said and done, we're going to have another level of bureaucracy that harms small businesses and kills jobs.

I do think that a more elegant solution exists that perhaps we can talk about when this bill reaches committee. It's a solution that's mentioned in the anti-fraud task force report, and it's something that I'm personally familiar with in my profession as a pharmacist, and that's the role of designated managers.

In pharmacy, owners of a pharmacy have to appoint a designated manager who is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the business and compliance with all the regulations. This manager, of course, cannot be just anyone. He or she, of course, has to be a pharmacist who is registered and licensed with the Ontario College of Pharmacists. The code of ethics that governs this individual is laid out by the college to ensure that the manager conducts himself in an ethical manner that is in the best interests of our patients. If he or she contravenes the code of ethics as laid out by the college, they face reprisals including the possibility of losing their licence. This provides a good deterrent against fraudulent behaviour.

I think that this is a model that could be well suited to the health and rehabilitation service providers that treat auto-related accidents. Keeping with my theme throughout this talk, we already have a number of different professional health clinics that accredit their members and take disciplinary action when necessary. I think that by engaging the resources they have and mandating that every health care clinic that bills insurers in auto has a designated manager who is a registered health professional, this could go a long way in achieving the oversight we're looking for without saddling small business owners with an additional level of bureaucracy. By making better use of the HCAI billing system, fraudulent clinics could be more easily identified and reported to the respective college of that health care professional, the

designated manager, which would instigate its own investigation into the practise of that clinic.

This is merely a suggestion, but I think that this government has just been too quick to add more legislation and regulation. They don't think creatively enough about this policy issue. There's more than one way to go from point A to point B, and this government seems committed to taking whatever way costs the taxpayer more and further burdens our small business owners.

Those are two of my main concerns with the bill as it currently sits. I do think it's good to see amendments to the storage liens act but, again, its minimal measure pales in comparison to the numerous challenges that are out there in the system.

As I try to wind up my discussion, I just want to go over the PC auto insurance plan and reiterate some of the dangers that are going on through legislation in this Legislature with regard to auto insurance and the potential poor outcomes that may occur because of it.

The first part of our plan is to encourage competition and reduce excess bureaucracy. We'd like to adopt a file-and-use rate-setting process to allow companies to lower prices quicker, ensure greater market competitiveness and encourage a wider range of discount offerings for Ontario drivers. This file-and-use system would allow technology to enter our marketplace quicker. We could actually have usage-based insurance offered to every Ontarian, where this device is attached to the car and it measures how fast they drive and how often they drive. It could be of great benefit to seniors and also our new drivers in the province, whether they be young or new immigrants who have got driver licences, so that we can get a true, accurate measure of how they're performing. Right now, the current system of filing and waiting for a response from FSCO to go ahead with your rate increase inhibits the ability for us to utilize technology at its fullest.

You're seeing a system right now—and I don't know if anybody at home watching this realizes it, but for an insurance company to raise or lower their rates, they have to create a report, which is thousands of pages long, including all their mathematics and stats, using actuarial science to prove why their rate increase is a plus or a negative.

Mr. Mark Walker: Does Ontario Hydro have to do that?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Ontario Hydro should have to, with the amount of work they would do.

However, they have to create this report, submit it to FSCO and, if they're both on the same page with what's being filled out—because sometimes it goes back and forth for a few months before FSCO will arrange it—then FSCO will go through it and check their numbers—their own actuarial scientist will look at it and determine if the numbers match—and they can raise or lower prices.

It can somehow take between nine months to a year to get a rate change in this province. So if you want to be competitive and have lower rates, under this current

system it takes an insurance company up to a year to actually compete and lower rates.

If we had that in other parts of the province in other industries—if Walmart had to wait a year to get approval before lowering rates, we would not see Walmart, Target or even the corner store, the mom-and-pop shop, able to compete, because they'd have to wait a year to get approval to lower their prices. We wouldn't see prices go down.

What we're saying here is that a file-and-use system would allow industry, auto insurers, to compete. We would probably see State Farm remain in the marketplace. We might even see Progressive come to the marketplace. We'd have more insurers competing for our business. That's what we want to see in this province, competition back into the marketplace, so that if I want to get a lower rate, and it's file-and-use, and the competitor down the street wants my business because I'm a good driver, they should have the right to lower that rate and come after me and try to get me to switch over to their product. I think it would create quite a bit of competition.

1720

Those at home are saying, "Well, they can just raise the rates just the same." That's where the FSCO regulator comes in. We can actually use FSCO for what they were created for: regulation. Regulate the business. So what we could do with FSCO is, say if there's an X%—and we can agree upon it in the Legislature, what percentage—increase that we don't think is fair, then FSCO can go, "Okay, you can't have that rate. We want to see this report on why you think it has to go up so high."

Right now, as the system is, it penalizes insurers for wanting to compete in lower prices. So why can't we affix to a file-and-use system, get that competition back in the market and bring in technology? Bring in the technology so that we can utilize what's being created, which is used in the United Kingdom. It's being used in the States to keep insurance prices lower and actually measure how a person drives. It's actually used in the up-to-date statistics and data that really say that you're a good driver and you deserve lower rates. But the excess bureaucracy is stopping that from happening. So we think that's a great idea to bring that in.

If we do an example that we've talked about—Chicago has a system of pure competition. The marketplace is pretty open for competition and they have some of the lowest rates throughout the United States.

Our second point that we always like to talk about, which I've talked about in depth earlier, is about the dispute resolution process. In the event of a claims dispute, the PC Party wants to allow people to opt for private mediations. This way, it will reduce wait times and costs associated with waiting with the government-appointed mediator. It will happen quicker. People will either come to an agreement sooner or it will be off to the courts or off to an arbitrator quicker so that the sooner we can get somebody to get their agreement in place with the insurers, the sooner they can be treated, the sooner they'll get

healthier, the sooner they'll get back to their work and be back to their productive lives.

Unfortunately, sometimes disputes last so long that a temporary injury, because it's not getting the necessary treatment, can become a permanent injury, and then that adds to the cost of the system. If we can get treatment in as soon as possible and perhaps prevent many temporary injuries from becoming permanent injuries, it leads to a healthier lifestyle for Ontarians and a cheaper insurance cost in the industry.

We also want to establish a true, independent, peer-reviewed, medical assessment system. We want standardized assessment procedures that require multiple assessments being performed by medical professionals. By doing so, this is another use that we could use FSCO for. FSCO can keep and monitor and manage that list of independent medical assessors. No longer will we get the fight that some assessors are pro-insurer and some are pro-claimant; we will have a true standardized system, that FSCO can monitor that list and ensure that it maintains that way, and at the same time, institute the peer-to-peer reviews that we mentioned earlier, where a neurologist studies the claimant and the insurer has to use the same class of doctor to ensure that it's peer-to-peer, reviewed.

The third point we want to do in the PC auto insurance plan for Ontario is combat fraud. As mentioned by the Minister of Finance, he wants to institute a special fraud unit. I believe this government, over the last three years since I've been here, each time we brought up the idea, said it was not a good idea, but somehow they've decided to change their mind because now they're realizing that you do have to deal with fraud, and there are only a few ways to do so. The PC Party's been right since day one. We want to establish a special unit of the crown attorney's office to investigate and prosecute fraud.

We said so—we didn't make it up. We just didn't just come in one day—Tim wasn't sitting at a board table and said, "This is a great idea. Let's go with this." We actually do research into our policies, and this system of having a fraud unit worked in New Jersey. Probably, it worked so well in New Jersey that all those fraudsters have moved to Ontario. They just crossed the lake and drove down. So they're in Ontario now creating the fraud—but their fraud unit worked so well. It also worked in Britain. So why can't it work here? Why is the government sitting on their hands and not instituting this task force, this fraud unit? They're still talking about it. Their answer is to have a 1-800 number. That's not going to cut it. We agree with you on the fraud unit. It's our idea. We'll let you have it. We've got a whole myriad of ideas to help fix this province. You're welcome to all of them. We'll support you, but let's get that fraud unit created.

Also, to combat fraud, we want to use the HCAI system that I mentioned earlier, the health claims for auto insurance computer system, as an electronic billing system for health care clinics. This will identify abnormal billing practices. It works; I go back to pharmacy because that's where all my experience lies. The Ontario Drug

Benefit Program and all the private insurers—everything's computerized. If you want a prescription, it has to go through the computer system. You can't do paper claims without their permission. What this does is, if someone comes in for a prescription 10 days early, the computer system says, "No. You're not getting your money for this. You can't do that unless you have a specific reason why." So it works; it's a system that works. There's no reason why we can't use the HCAI system and expand it into monitoring the fraud system to get better control of some of the poor billing practices that are occurring out there.

Not only does the computer system save on paper billings, it really saves on costs for both the health care clinics and the insurers also, with having the people there to fill out the claim papers, following back and forth, and perhaps lost mail or using Purolator or whatever to get the papers back and forth. You can do everything electronically. Even banking can be done electronically. We can save a heck of a lot of money. It's sitting there for it to be used by the government, but it's not getting utilized. I just don't know why, going back to my previous point, we don't utilize what's already there instead of creating something that is probably going to add on to the history of auto insurance, the bureaucracy, so we'll be back here in two years' time or whenever the next possible election is, having this big debate about auto insurance.

We are also advocating for the implementations of the recommendations from the anti-fraud task force report. This was done a year and a half ago, 30-some-odd recommendations. We're only seeing six or seven of those possibly implemented or talked about. What's taking so long to get to this? They agree that fraud is a big problem; we agree fraud is a big problem. Let's deal with it. There's \$1.5 billion that we can remove in costs, and then we'd see the premiums go down. Why aren't we dealing with it? There are many task forces and panels. There's 30-some-odd panels reporting back to the government. It's about time they start utilizing some of the reports they're receiving to possibly get value for their money.

The last point we make in our PC auto insurance plan is increased accountability. We need a fair, well-functioning marketplace for auto insurance. We want to make sure the senior insurer executives are personally and financially liable for the conduct of the company. I think what's happened over the years is there's no trust anymore between the insurance companies and the people who are paying the premiums. There's some way that we need to re-establish that trust, and one of these ways is to make the senior executives accountable. I don't think they'd have any problem with that because they will follow rules put in front of them and ensure that we have a fair marketplace.

Just before I wrap up—because I'm going to go beyond the six minutes remaining, just because the Bramalea-Gore-Malton MPP stopped there. I just want

to beat him a little bit in my talking and maybe feel a bit better.

Mr. Bill Walker: Don't you dare leave a second on there.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I won't leave a second.

Anyway, I just want to touch base. The member from Haldimand-Norfolk, Toby Barrett, mentioned it. Mutual insurance companies: These are the lifeblood of rural Ontario and they always seem to be left out of the conversation. We've always got to be sure that the changes we're making here in the Legislature for the auto insurance product as a whole aren't going to drastically, adversely affect our mutual insurance companies that are out in rural Ontario. I have three in my riding alone. They're well established. They've been around for as long as farmers have been around, ensuring that they get coverage. We've got to ensure that some of the legislation that's passed through here ensures that they're still viable at the end of the day, because they play an important part in our local economy and the insurance industry as a whole. I do want to recommend to people in this Legislature, as we further discuss Bill 171 and as we take it into committee, provided it passes going into committee, that at the back of our minds, we keep the mutual insurance companies—just so we know that they are there and to realize they're not as big as some of the other corporations out there providing insurance. They may not have the ability to handle some of this drastic legislation that's going through this House. So keep them in mind to ensure that we keep them viable. I think it's only fair for rural Ontario that these people are viable. They are having their yearly meeting this week. I'm going over there for lunch on Thursday. Usually, I have a great time talking. If anybody does have mutual companies in their riding, be sure to get out there because they like to see you and they like to know that we know they are there for us, because they're kind of like the little brother of the insurance industry, but they're a strong little brother. We just want to make sure that we keep them viable with all these changes going on.

1730

Mr. Bill Walker: Competition's good.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Competition—well, I brought up the competition.

In talking in general, what has happened over the last—the 15% cut, as I said, that the NDP wanted within a year, and the Liberals said, "Okay, we'll do it in two years maybe," and the NDP said, "Yes, okay. We're okay with that." I've seen rate cuts for the drunk drivers and bad drivers of 15%. I've seen people in my own riding going up 40%.

This is a government that's being propped up by the NDP, who are supporting a Premier without a mandate. The mandate of this government, as I said before, ended in October 2012, but somehow the leadership of the NDP continually wants to prop up what—the current Premier is carrying on what the old Premier did: high spending, high taxes, businesses leaving this area, and they're decimating auto insurance in this province.

Hopefully, they're starting to listen to the PC Party. We've got four action points. They're listening to part of one. If they implement all four, we can guarantee them that we'll have a better product for all Ontarians, a competitive marketplace, and rates will go down through competition. Then we won't have to be doing this every two years, putting a band-aid on the system. Hopefully, they'll get together, support this bill and support the rest of our ideas, and we can go forward and have a better product in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: One of the points I have to commend the member from Elgin-Middlesex on is that there's an area that I didn't focus enough of my time on, and I think the member did address it, which is that in the proposed legislation, subsection 280(3) literally precludes the ability for someone to bring an action in court. This is a serious abrogation of the rights of drivers. To be able to preclude you from bringing your dispute when it comes to the benefit side and not being able to bring an action in court is a serious limitation of your rights, and it's a serious problem. I think it's one of the major reasons, along with the fact that the proposed way of dealing with the dispute resolution system is not an improvement—there's no evidentiary basis to show it will actually reduce costs. That, in my opinion, should encourage the Conservative Party to not support this bill the way it stands right now. It is fatally flawed, in my respectful submission. In addition, the fact that removing that interest payment—it was a tool to encourage speedy settlement, and removing that will only encourage insurance companies to delay in the settlement of cases. So this is a fatally flawed bill on those two components alone. The other components, and members spoke to them—certainly, implementing fraud reduction mechanisms is fine. It's something we all support. But with those two components, there's a serious problem.

I quickly want to touch on the Conservative plan. We've seen this strategy. We don't have the evidence of apples-to-apples comparisons to show that this actually works, the idea of an unfettered system. We know that with corporate tax giveaways, the more corporate tax breaks we give, it does not result in increased employment. Blank cheques just give companies more money; they don't encourage job creation. We don't have evidence to support that notion. Nor do we have support in any evidence that if we give the insurance companies more breaks, they'll bring premiums down. We've seen that it hasn't happened. I don't see how it would happen if we did it even more so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm sure my colleague for Bramalea-Gore-Malton will appreciate the fact that, in some respects, I'm going to pick up where he left off. He is correct in one aspect, which is that one of the challenges facing this bill is to ensure that we do not unintentionally empower insurance companies to simply bleed people

dry. That's not the intent of the bill, and one of our challenges as legislators is, in bringing this bill through committee, to ensure that a policyholder with a perfectly legitimate claim isn't forced to sit there for years and years and years while an insurance company brings motion after motion and drags and delays the process all the way through court, such that it can make the policyholder a much lower offer and the policyholder will say, "To heck with it. I'll just take whatever it is they're offering." That is not the intent of the bill.

The member raises a very good point and one that I will disagree with him on. It's not a fatal flaw. This is something that we can work out in committee. We have worked out far more challenging things in committee. It is in fact something that some of the local lawyers in Mississauga came to see me about. They said, "As the advocates for many people who bring their issues in to us and we end up working on their behalf against the insurance companies, we cannot so completely tilt the playing field toward the insurance companies." That's not what this bill sets out to do, but it is something that we have to iron out as we debate this bill in the Legislature and make sure that that doesn't happen. In this respect, the issue raised by my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton is, in fact, well taken. He sets out something that together we can resolve in moving this bill through to second and third reading and hash out in committee and make sure that that thing doesn't happen. This has got to be a system that's fair, and that's what the bill sets out to achieve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: We had a presentation from the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. I know he only had an hour, but he covered a hundred-year history of the insurance industry. I was intrigued to realize from his presentation that it was not until 1980 that legislation came in requiring people to have insurance, and of course not everybody does. There are the outlaws out there, the cheats, the fraudsters, those people who cost all of us. They cost the premium payment for the honest carrier.

It has been 11 years. We sincerely hope this legislation is a start. We certainly like the title. It actually does acknowledge the presence of fraud. As the member indicated in his presentation, in recent years in the hundred-year history, it has become a bit of a pre-election soap opera. The staged accidents continue—the phony health clinics, the billing for treatment that may or may not have occurred. We know the incidence of accidents has gone down but premiums have gone up. Again, what does that tell you?

The member made mention of the mutual insurance industry. They come together under an umbrella group: OMIA, the Ontario Mutual Insurance Association. Coincidentally, they are having their annual conference in Toronto this week. I sat on the board of Norfolk Mutual for a number of years. I know the member has several companies over his way: Yarmouth Mutual, West Elgin Mutual—there are about 40 companies. This is the model

that we can look at on how they do it, as far as our deliberations on this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Michael Prue: I must comment to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London that I enjoyed most of what he had to say today. It was really quite a spirited defence of the insurance industry. I do have to say, though, that he got a couple of things terribly wrong. He started out his speech by talking about October 2012 as somehow being the watershed mark when this government lost its legitimacy, and he ended his speech on the exact same thing. So I had to think historically, what is this member stating? If he says that Premier McGuinty quitting and turning over to now-Premier Wynne is the wrong thing, is he also saying, in the same historical context, in 2001, that Premier Harris quitting and turning over the reins of power for a year and a half or so to then-Premier Eves was wrong? How about Premier Robarts when he left and turned it over to Bill Davis? Was that wrong, too? He was there for a long time. How about Danny Williams in Newfoundland, another good Conservative, who turned it over to Dunderdale, who has since been deposed herself? Was that wrong? Or how about Klein turning it over to Redford? That's another Conservative. Was that wrong, too? Or how about what happened in BC, ending up with Premier Clark? Or how about Heath and Thatcher, if you want to go all the way to England? Or how about Mulroney turning it over to Kim Campbell? Because if what you're saying is wrong over there, then your party has been wrong 10 times in my lifetime, and so this is what I have to know. If you think that this is an untoward political thing, then your Conservative Party has broken the rule 10 times in my lifetime and done no different than what is being done over there. That's my comment.

1740

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments.

I return to the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to thank the members from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Mississauga–Streetsville, Haldimand–Norfolk and Beaches–East York for their spirited comments.

Just to the member from Beaches–East York, I'm sure you would have loved to experience the retiring of a Premier and someone coming in, but you can't manage to get two mandates in a row because you decimate the province when you become in charge. You go against your promise for public auto insurance. You spend more than the McGuinty–Wynne Liberals have ever spent in their lifetime. You decimated the jobs. It took a Premier like Mike Harris to come in and fix this province, create one million jobs, balance the deficit and bring this economy back to the strength that we had that the McGuinty–Wynne Liberals have lost over the last 12 years.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, the fact that we do need to look at the issue about getting access to the courts. Hopefully, he'll work with our party in committee in making the neces-

sary amendments to ensure that this bill is going to be done right, at the end of the day. I don't think it's time to say no to it.

This government has made a promise to lower rates by 15%, and they were the instigators to ensure they lower it. But for them to oppose a bill when they're trying to cut costs to ensure that 15% strategy achieved—I don't think that's the right route to go for the third party. They need to take the bill—it's a little bit of a first start at fixing the costs in the system—and make the necessary amendments to make sure this bill works.

Mr. Speaker, I will go back, because we're not playing populist politics on auto insurance. We're taking a serious role to ensure that we have a product that's sustainable and as affordable as possible for all Ontarians. We're not going to pick and choose in order to gain an extra two or three votes, because, at the end of the day, Ontario needs a government that is based on looking out for the best interests of Ontarians and not necessarily getting the right vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up and to speak to Bill 171. It's been an interesting afternoon, actually, to hear the historical context on auto insurance. Clearly, every party has tackled it in their own way to some varying levels of success.

But what's before us today is very interesting, because it's a piece of legislation that seeks to address some long-standing issues in the auto insurance industry, and it does not do that. It is not the solution to the problem at hand on a number of issues: on dispute resolution and/or on the issue of fraud.

Everyone in this House would agree, I hope, that auto insurance rates have continued to rise, because you must be hearing from your constituents. This is not a populist election issue; it is a fact. People's rates, regardless of their driving records, continue to go up. Premiums go up, even as drivers' records and the number of accidents that they have are actually going down.

When we talk about auto insurance in the province of Ontario, the reaction that we get is, "Yes, please, continue to fight for this." So we don't think of that as a pocketbook issue. We actually consider it a matter of fairness in the province of Ontario, because in 2010, the then finance minister, Dwight Duncan, stood up in this House and said, "We are going to address this issue, and your rates are going to go down. The benefits that go out from insurance agencies are going to be reduced and standardized. You are going to know what you're going to get, and, if you're a good driver, your insurance rates are going to go down." But, to be clear, that never happened. That statement was made in this House. Perhaps that was the intention, but it never materialized. The only thing that has materialized is a lot of reserves, an increasing amount of reserves on behalf of insurance companies.

Some people question the level of profits that insurance companies have, and they say those are not real numbers, but what is real to the people of this province is

that their insurance rates continue to go up. So they asked us as the third party to take this issue to the government. We took that issue to the government in the last budget round and we were successful in making sure that it was part of the budget. We participated in this House on their behalf, and that's what the people of this province expect of us. They do not expect us to come into this place and not read a budget and not bring their concerns forward through that budget process. They do not expect us just to show up and heckle; they expect us to show up and work. The people of this province want their politicians to be engaged in this place.

So while I look at Bill 171, I actually have to refer to some of the comments that the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton has raised, because he has correctly identified some structural issues that are contained within this legislation. I'm going to address a couple of those first.

At first hand, this certainly looks to be a proposal from the government to offer another generous concession to insurance companies at the expense of all the auto insurance policyholders and accident victims in the province of Ontario. As many members in this House have already pointed out, this is not a choice: If you are a driver in the province of Ontario, you need to have insurance.

When we heard from the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, when they came to our finance committee—it's on Hansard, it's a matter of record—they said, "Make sure you've read your policy. Make sure you've gone through it. Make sure you've closed all those loopholes," because there are loopholes. They are actually on the front line, they are in the courts, they are directly involved in these disputes, and they see how policyholders are being treated.

While there are many good ideas in Justice Cunningham's final report—and that has been referenced by several members this evening—on the dispute resolution system that forms the basis of the legislative changes, there is one glaring deficiency in the proposed new system: denying accident victims access to courts. I'm surprised to hear the PC Party saying that they will be supporting this piece of legislation, because navigating the justice system is already complex. There are already systemic barriers, from poverty to physical, geographical locations of accessing justice in the province of Ontario, so I am surprised to hear the PC Party say already that they're going to support this piece of legislation when clearly, in the name of cost savings to the insurance industry, the government is proposing to wipe out recourse to an independent judicial system that safeguards the fundamental rights of citizens and to replace the courts with a tribunal.

A second issue that we have with this piece of legislation is that Bill 171 would change a 30-year-old rule that has been so important to those who have suffered injuries in Ontario. Prejudgment interest on pain and suffering damages is intended to compensate an innocent victim when the negligent person's insurance company delays paying those damages. So under the guise of fighting fraud and reducing automobile insurance rates, this meas-

ure was presented as a money-saving initiative for insurers, and clearly the change in the interest rate has nothing to do with fighting fraud. It's in the title, but it has nothing to do with fighting fraud.

In reality this changes nothing more than another generous concession to Ontario's profitable insurance sector, and we take exception to that because we think that the scale has been tipped in the favour of insurance companies and we would like to work with insurance companies to actually right that scale.

And I do want to say, I do meet with the mutual insurers often. They're in my riding, and I will be going down and having breakfast and lunch with them, because they are here for their annual general meeting. We will be talking about Bill 171 because we're not going to shy away from it.

We think that there are structural issues with this legislation that will not address the problems at hand, and so taking it to committee may be very challenging; I want to say that. I do want to actually also say that there has been some haste. This legislation has come forward very quickly, and not very much happens in this place very quickly, although this morning we had several proclamations get accomplished.

1750

Actually, I'm going to quote from the article by Alan Shanoff. Now, I'm quoting the Toronto Sun, so you never really know what you're going to end up in a day—but Alan actually rightly points out, and he takes exception to, the haste. He says, "But what is most objectionable about Bill 171 is the haste with which it has been introduced—just two weeks following release of the Ontario Automobile Insurance Dispute Resolution System Review by J. Douglas Cunningham, a former Associate Chief Justice of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice"—very well qualified.

"That must be some sort of speed record.

"But with this haste there has been no opportunity for input by stakeholders."

Once again, and this seems to be a trend that we have seen in this House, a piece of legislation comes to the floor and there are gaps in that legislation. The promise or the offer is put out, "Well, let's get this to committee and fix it." This is something that I do not understand. Why don't they just bring the legislation, in its full entirety, to the floor of the House so that we could actually have a productive conversation and a debate about Bill 171, in this instance?

I wanted to quickly just give you a scenario of how this may play out if Bill 171 goes to committee, has third reading and is passed.

Under the proposed changes in Bill 171, if the accident victim is injured and it was someone else's fault, the victim now has to pay a lawyer to bring two entirely different cases in two entirely different systems, one in court against the person who injured that person and then this new arbitration against the insurance company who denied

the benefits in the first place. The accident victim now has a huge extra legal cost and two different legal proceedings, one in the court system and one in the arbitration system. How does this serve the drivers of this province? It adds a whole other layer of bureaucracy. It's another barrier to accident victims seeking compensation and perhaps then also moving on with their lives. It makes more sense to allow an accident victim the right that they currently have, as the legislation is written, to bring the two claims together in court and vastly reduce the costs that they have to incur.

None of these changes has anything to do with fighting fraud. Everybody agrees that fraud is an issue, but these proposals in this legislation do not address the issue of fraud. But it does have everything to do with making it easier for insurance companies to wrongfully deny benefits, delay settlements and make it harder for you to collect what you are rightfully owed. Our complex auto insurance system makes it extremely difficult for people to access the benefits that they are reasonably entitled to. It is not simple. There are real challenges. This proposed change will make sure that more victims just give up because they just can't afford to fight.

Bill 171, as I mentioned, would also address the prejudgment interest. This would change a 30-year-old rule that has been so important to those who have suffered injuries in Ontario. Prejudgment interest on pain and suffering damages is intended to compensate an innocent victim when the negligent person's insurance company delays paying those damages. Basically, it ensures timely payment for pain and suffering damages by insurance companies to innocent victims.

We see the amendments that have been introduced as problematic, as sort of moving away from the direction that we should be moving to in the province of Ontario, and given the lack of progress on auto insurance rates, period, we're calling into question whether or not this legislation is effective, can be effective, and can be fixed.

We're going to continue, though, to push this government to do the right thing for drivers. As mentioned, auto insurance is not something you can choose. It's not, as the member earlier mentioned, just like having a cell-phone. You need insurance to drive a car, and we need to make sure that those auto insurance rates actually are very comparable or fair, based on our driving record. Right now, there's a disconnect and Bill 171 absolutely does not address that there is a fundamental issue of unfairness currently in the auto industry.

I look forward to continued debate, and I also look forward to meeting with the mutual insurers at their AGM later on today.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being very close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1755.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉ PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
des services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle**

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Continued from back cover

Horse racing industry

Mr. Randy Pettapiece.....	5804
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5804

Agricultural colleges

Mr. John Vanthof.....	5804
Hon. Brad Duguid.....	5804

Order of business

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	5805
------------------------------------	------

Notices of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	5805
------------------------------------	------

Visitors

Mr. Tim Hudak.....	5805
--------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Geoff Stevens

Mr. Bill Walker.....	5806
----------------------	------

Co-op education

Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	5806
------------------------	------

Equal opportunity

Ms. Soo Wong.....	5806
-------------------	------

Highway improvement

Mr. Randy Pettapiece.....	5807
---------------------------	------

Organ and tissue donation

Mr. Michael Mantha.....	5807
-------------------------	------

Celine Tower

Mr. John Fraser.....	5807
----------------------	------

Clara Hughes

Mr. Michael Harris.....	5808
-------------------------	------

Ordre de la Pléiade

M. Phil McNeely.....	5808
----------------------	------

Agricultural colleges

Mr. Steve Clark.....	5808
----------------------	------

Events in Sri Lanka

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	5808
-------------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	5809
Debate adjourned.....	5809

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Learning Through Workplace Experience Act, 2014, Bill 172, Ms. Sattler / Loi de 2014 sur l'apprentissage par l'expérience en milieu de travail, projet de loi 172, Mme Sattler

First reading agreed to.....	5809
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	5810

Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Keeping Ontario's Roads Safe), 2014, Bill 173, Mr. Murray / Loi de 2014 modifiant le Code de la route (assurer la sécurité des routes de l'Ontario), projet de loi 173, M. Murray

First reading agreed to.....	5810
------------------------------	------

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Road safety

Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	5810
--------------------------	------

Consumer protection

Hon. Tracy MacCharles.....	5812
----------------------------	------

Road safety

Mr. Norm Miller.....	5812
----------------------	------

Consumer protection

Mr. Toby Barrett.....	5813
-----------------------	------

Road safety

Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	5813
------------------------	------

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	5813
-----------------------	------

Consumer protection

Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	5813
------------------------	------

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

School safety

Mrs. Jane McKenna.....	5814
------------------------	------

Government services

Mr. Michael Mantha.....	5814
-------------------------	------

Minimum wage

Ms. Soo Wong.....	5814
-------------------	------

Agricultural colleges

Mr. Steve Clark.....	5815
----------------------	------

Off-road vehicles

Mme France Gélinas.....	5815
-------------------------	------

Use of digital technologies	
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri	5815
Lyme disease	
Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....	5815
Environmental protection	
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	5816
Renewable energy	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5816
Ontario Ranger Program	
Mr. Michael Mantha	5816
Agricultural colleges	
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	5817
Off-road vehicles	
Mr. Michael Mantha	5817
Wind turbines	
Mr. Bill Walker.....	5817

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act, 2014, Bill 171, Mr. Sousa / Loi de 2014 de lutte contre la fraude et de réduction des taux d'assurance-automobile, projet de loi 171, M. Sousa	
Hon. Linda Jeffrey	5817
Mr. Steven Del Duca.....	5818
Mr. Bill Walker	5821
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5821
Mr. Bob Delaney.....	5822

Mr. Jim McDonell.....	5822
Hon. Linda Jeffrey.....	5822
Mr. Norm Miller.....	5823
Mr. John Vanthof	5826
L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur.....	5826
Mrs. Gila Martow.....	5826
M. Jagmeet Singh.....	5826
Mr. Norm Miller.....	5827
Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	5827
Ms. Soo Wong.....	5834
Mr. Toby Barrett	5835
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	5835
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	5835
Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	5836
Ms. Soo Wong.....	5836
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	5838
Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	5838
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	5838
Mr. Bill Walker	5839
Ms. Soo Wong.....	5839
Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	5839
Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	5848
Mr. Bob Delaney	5848
Mr. Toby Barrett	5849
Mr. Michael Prue.....	5849
Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	5849
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	5850
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5851

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 17 March 2014 / Lundi 17 mars 2014

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop	5791
Mr. Frank Klees	5791
Ms. Catherine Fife	5791
Mr. Bill Walker	5791
Hon. Reza Moridi	5791
Mr. Todd Smith	5791
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5791
Hon. Charles Sousa	5791
Canadian mission in Afghanistan	
Hon. John Milloy	5791
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5791
Mr. Tim Hudak	5791
Ms. Andrea Horwath	5792
Order of business	
Mr. Todd Smith	5792
Motion agreed to	5793
Tamil Heritage Month Act, 2014, Bill 156, Mr. Smith / Loi de 2014 sur le Mois du patrimoine tamoul, projet de loi 156, M. Smith	
Second reading agreed to	5793
Tamil Heritage Month Act, 2014, Bill 156, Mr. Smith / Loi de 2014 sur le Mois du patrimoine tamoul, projet de loi 156, M. Smith	
Third reading agreed to	5793
Order of business	
Ms. Dipika Damerla	5793
Motion agreed to	5793
Pope John Paul II Day Act, 2014, Bill 72, Ms. Damerla / Loi de 2014 sur le Jour du Pape Jean-Paul II, projet de loi 72, Mme Damerla	
Third reading agreed to	5793
Order of business	
Ms. Soo Wong	5793
Motion agreed to	5793
Children and Youth in Care Day Act, 2014, Bill 53, Ms. Wong / Loi de 2014 sur le Jour des enfants et des jeunes pris en charge, projet de loi 53, Mme Wong	
Third reading agreed to	5794

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Taxation

Mr. Tim Hudak	5794
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5794

Ontario budget

Mr. Tim Hudak	5795
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5795

Public transit

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5796
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5796

Job creation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5797
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5797

Agricultural colleges

Mr. Steve Clark	5798
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5798

Pan Am Games

Mr. Paul Miller	5799
Hon. Michael Chan	5799

French-language education

Mr. Grant Crack	5799
Hon. Brad Duguid	5799

Ontario budget

Mr. Victor Fedeli	5800
Hon. Charles Sousa	5800

Natural gas rates

Mr. Peter Tabuns	5801
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5801

Primary health care

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri	5801
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5801

Energy policies

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5802
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5802

Blood and plasma donation

Mme France Gélinas	5803
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5803

Water quality

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5803
Hon. James J. Bradley	5803

Continued on inside back cover

CA20N
X1
-D23



Government
Publications

No. 113

N° 113

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 18 March 2014

Mardi 18 mars 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 18 March 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 18 mars 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (LEAVES TO HELP FAMILIES), 2014 LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (CONGÉS POUR AIDER LES FAMILLES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 3, 2013, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence / *Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels, le congé pour soins à un enfant gravement malade et le congé en cas de décès ou de disparition d'un enfant dans des circonstances criminelles.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up and talk about the family caregiver leave act, employment standards amendment. This act actually has had a lot of discussion in this House. It has been a long-standing issue that we know of in the province of Ontario. The bill obviously provides an unpaid, job-protected leave of absence to provide care or support to certain family members who have serious medical conditions.

Let's be clear, the bill is very small; however, it is a positive step forward. But there would be relatively low take-up if the federal government does not change EI so that caregivers taking advantage of the leave have some form of income support. The government must push the federal government hard to change EI so that there is some form of income support for those who are taking leave.

Most employees don't understand their rights under the Employment Standards Act. Most of us in this House would have had people come into our offices in our constituencies, and you can tell that they are not familiar with what rights they have as employees under the current Employment Standards Act. The government must ensure that Ontario workers know about the leave and that there are no employer reprisals for employees wishing to take the leave.

Anyone who has ever gotten ill on the job—my sister just recently went through this. She's in a unionized environment. She had to have emergency surgery about three weeks ago. Originally, the employer, of course, is very understanding because they care about the employee—hopefully—and they want to make sure that that employee gets healthy fast. But it didn't take long in the recovery process for that employer to say, "Well, can you do this? Can you do that?" She's off work. She's recovering from major surgery. There has to be some protection for those employees, and they need to know their rights.

In today's life of work, employers have high expectations. First of all, when you look at the unemployment rate in the province of Ontario, you do feel fortunate to have a job. We're going through the hiring process with the Financial Accountability Officer right now. It's interesting to be on the other side of that employment table because, while it has taken some time, almost nine and a half months—we wanted to hire an FAO, not to give birth to a Financial Accountability Officer. But it's interesting to be on the other side of that table asking questions of people who potentially would take a very serious responsibility in the province of Ontario, and we of course take it very seriously. That's why we brought it to the budget process in the first place.

Let's just take a little step back around the background of Bill 30. All employees who are covered by the ESA, whether full-time permanent or short-term contract, would be eligible for leave. This is important, because what we're seeing in the province of Ontario today is that there is more part-time precarious work—more so than we have ever seen. When the government stands up and talks about their jobs numbers, they're including that forced part-time, that precarious work, and sometimes they're even including those interns, those unpaid internship numbers, in their stats. It's a big number, but it's the quality of the work and the quality of the employment that we are most concerned about on this side of the House.

From the background perspective though, there would be no requirement that an employee be employed for a particular length of time or that the employer employ a specified number of employees in order for the employee to qualify. A qualified employee would be able to take up to eight weeks per calendar year per family member, and a physician would determine whether the condition of the family member is indeed serious in the meaning of the act. In other words, the physical recommendation triggers eligibility for the leave.

Other leaves under the Ontario ESA currently include pregnancy leave, parental leave, family medical leave,

organ donor leave—I was actually very pleased to see this included in there. Organ donation, of course, is a huge issue in the province of Ontario, and we do have, I think, a shared responsibility to ensure that we make it easy for people to donate organs. I personally just went through my form on my driver's licence, and I'm going to be an official organ donor. It could be a more streamlined process. That, perhaps, is a conversation for another day, but I'm pleased to see that it's included under leaves under the current ESA. Three other ones are personal emergency leave, declared emergency leave and reservist leave.

This new leave should not be confused, though, with the family medical leave, which provides up to eight weeks' leave to provide care to a family member who has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death occurring within 26 weeks. Since 2004, there has been EI support for this leave, conditioned with a significant risk of death occurring within 26 weeks. These are heartbreaking, heartbreaking stories when family members are called upon to help in a palliative care or in a hospice care situation.

Of course, we are seeing this happen more and more, because the hospice sector—those who are advocating for dying with dignity, if you will—is completely underfunded. In fact, it's a miracle that the hospice sector actually gets as much done and helps as many people as they do. They rely, of course, heavily on philanthropy and fundraising, and certainly there is room for improvement on that funding file.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I know home care.

Ms. Catherine Fife: And home care—that's a very good point. Home care, actually, would be of huge assistance with family caregiver provisions. Certainly, when you do see people coming home, the transition from hospital to the home has not been very successful. That's another reason why we negotiated for some secure home care funding in the last budget, the five-day home care guarantee, and we were successful in that.

I was very pleased, actually: I attended a LHIN meeting in Kitchener–Waterloo not that long ago and heard first-hand how that budgetary measure that we negotiated, that concession that we sought, to support the last budget actually is making a difference in the lives of people in Kitchener–Waterloo and indeed across the entire province. In Waterloo region, it's actually \$7 million to the local CCAC, and it is making a tangible difference in the quality of home care in Kitchener–Waterloo.

0910

Just to complete the background on this file, though, it should also be noted that caregivers covered by a collective agreement or in a managerial position can sometimes get permission to use their own sick days to care for family members who are seriously ill. That's still a very difficult negotiation to have with your employer, quite honestly, because as I mentioned, the pressure that employees receive in this modern age of work is that you work all the time, and those expectations are quite high. This is a hard thing to sometimes negotiate, Madam Speaker.

So for many working in a protected environment, if you will, there is not much value added in the bill. This reinforces the fact that enforcement of all ESA provisions needs to be strengthened, as those who work in the peripheral parts of the labour market will be reluctant to use these and other provisions of the ESA unless they are sure of no employer reprisal.

I will admit, this is actually very difficult to control because there is obviously a power imbalance and a power dynamic between an employer and an employee. All of us in the course of our lives have experienced it, I'm sure, and it's something that we have to be mindful of and cautious of.

Under the employment standards, another short-term priority for action, I think, is to not cut the \$6 million from the employment standards enforcement branch. This is a key component of it, and this is a key idea that's come from us. I think this goes back to the effectiveness of the overall bill. As I said, this is a minor change but essentially a positive change, and it's a step to provide a measure of job protection to those taking time off from work to care for family members who are seriously ill, but if you don't have the enforcement piece in place and you don't have the protection piece in place for the employer, it actually does very little, because it's really just words on a page.

Obviously, it would be more effective if there was some sort of EI or other income support for that, but that doesn't appear likely, given the current nature of the relationship between the provincial government and the current federal government. To say that that is a marriage that is not going well would really be an understatement, but it actually is the responsibility of the provincial government to reach out to the federal government. It would be helpful, I think, quite honestly, if the federal government was more receptive to having a conversation about supporting those family members who take the time away from work to care for their family members. It's a basic act of compassion, but there is definitely an economic imperative for that, because many people cannot afford to take the time away from their workplace to stay home with a child, with an elderly parent, and we are definitely seeing an increase in eldercare sort of down-loaded, if you will, for basically a lack of options, to family members. With an aging demographic, we are seeing the extended family come back into the original family homestead. We're experiencing this personally, my own family, in Peterborough, and there are very few options. This is a key piece.

If you have an elderly parent who would love to stay at home and home care options are not exactly the answer, but they're looking for a long-term-care facility, the wait-lists are incredible. It's very similar, actually—when you think of the spectrum of our lives here, it reminds me of the same battles that I went through to get quality child care 15 years ago with my teenager. You get on a wait-list; you research the institutions. You want to make sure that it's a not-for-profit institution because you want to make sure all of that money that you are paying

actually goes into the quality of the services and the quality of the care, and those spaces for child care mirror the same challenge that you have with finding quality eldercare, and we're living that. Actually, all of us are going to live through that experience, but G30 looks to open a little window of opportunity, if you will, for family members to take time away from their workplace to care for a family member. If you can't afford to do it, then it's just not going to happen, and then you're left looking for the other community resources that, quite honestly, are stretched. I think it's quite fair to say that those community resources are stretched.

Some stakeholders in the community across the province have said that they have no real problems with the act, but just like a lot of the legislation that the Liberal government has brought forward, there are huge gaps in it. I just go back to this common theme of legislation coming to the floor of this Legislature which is just really surface stuff. Sometimes you scratch the surface and you just get a little more surface.

I'm relatively new here. I just don't understand why you wouldn't build some of the other community supports which actually would create a more successful outcome. That successful outcome would mean that people can leave their workplace; they would have some financial security in doing so; they would have some employment security in doing so; and quite honestly they themselves would be supportive. That's a major piece of this legislation that is missing.

Not every family member is qualified to care for a sick person. There are some skills that are involved. Supporting those family members as they navigate through some of those health issues is quite something.

I know that on the health file in my office, we've hired a full-time master's of social work graduate whose full-time job is to help people navigate through a complex health care system which, quite honestly, sets up barrier after barrier to access quality care. There are a lot of press conferences and a lot of ribbon-cutting and a lot of media releases that say, "No, it's streamlined." I can tell you from personal experience that if you are trying to navigate through the health care system in the province of Ontario, you will run into an administrative, bureaucratic nightmare. The full-time master's of social work student that I've hired in my office, she helps, on average, 15 to 20 people each week just to access the system. And when you're looking at mental health, for instance, when you consider the mental health issues that are prevalent in the province of Ontario, there's a whole other set of barriers and walls that are set up there.

We, of course, want to see some supports for employees who have to take leave from their workplace to care for family members. It does happen anyway. Out of pure desperation, and actually out of compassion and out of love, many mothers will leave their job to care for a sick child. Many husbands will take an unpaid leave from their workplace to care for an ailing spouse. They're doing so, currently, without any protection right now.

We do want to see those protections put in place. We do want to see better supports put in place, though, for

those family members. We have some outstanding and legitimate enforcement concerns with G30. Enforcement is always an issue with any employment standards—with the current ESA provisions.

Probably the biggest real obstacle to employees taking advantage of this leave—and I don't even think it's taking advantage. I mean, they're really just stepping in where the system is failing. But when they do take a leave, the fear is the employer will take some sort of reprisal. In this current employment environment, the pressure is on to increase productivity, to go that extra step, to hold on to that job. Clearly, the state of unemployment in the province of Ontario, which is the highest across this country, especially with youth—youth has actually doubled; it's almost 15% for youth in this province. The options of taking a leave from that job without fear of reprisal—on the ground, in reality, it's quite real.

We are seeing some issues that come into our office around quality health care, as I've mentioned. We have seen an increase in long-term-care facilities and the waitlists for those, but we are committed to ensuring that at the next stage, this act actually is strengthened, and it's only strengthened when the people that we serve come in and participate in the democratic process and ensure that their voices are heard in the legislation.

0920

We've been consistent since this minority government has been established, and quite honestly, the people like it. I think the people of this province actually really are happy that this is a minority government because for the first time ever they're seeing an exchange of ideas, and we're forced to listen to each other.

The people of this province want their politicians and their public servants to actually work harder, and I think that they're seeing that in real, tangible results that the NDP was able to accomplish in both budget processes, in the first in 2012, with the fairness tax and with increased supports for child care—child care is a long-standing issue in the province of Ontario—and in the last budget session, we were able to ensure that a Financial Accountability Officer will be part of this Legislature to double-check and to put that second sober thought, if you will, on policy decisions like moving gas plants around.

We've also been able to secure that home care and the youth employment strategy. We're proud of those results, and people see that we are working hard to ensure that their priorities are brought to this Legislature.

We obviously will be supporting G30. We will be looking to strengthen it and to ensure that when family members are in that very untenable and stressful situation where they have to leave their place of work to care for a family member, they are supported, they are protected, and their family member is well cared for.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Mike Colle: The NDP member from Kitchener-Waterloo has to explain why she keeps on talking to this bill. It's already gone through first- and second-reading

debate and committee. People are waiting to get the simple protection: that if they have a child or loved one that's sick at home and they take care of that child, they don't lose their job. It's a simple bill that's been through this House and debated for days and days.

You talk about all these great plans that are grandiose; here's a simple thing that helps people who need help to keep their job so they don't lose their job if their loved ones are sick.

You sit here stalling, talking. Why don't you just stand up and say that this bill needs to be passed and put it to a vote? Instead, you're standing up talking and talking and talking. Let's put your money where your mouth is.

People are waiting here because they've been fighting for this type of protection in Ontario for years. People don't want to lose their job if they have to go home and stay with their sick child. We can't then say, "Well, it's the federal government's fault," if we don't basically pass this simple protection about job protection.

The NDP can stand up and talk about how you're going to make this utopia, but all we're saying is put your money where your mouth is and help simple, hard-working families who have a loved one that's sick. I don't know if you understand that. When someone has cancer, when someone has heart disease, and they're saying, "I have to stay at home," and they ask their employer, "Please, I want to make sure I don't lose my job," the employer right now can say, "Forget it. You lose your job."

So stand up and say that you want this thing to come to a vote so we can get on with the work of helping families, and then we can get more help from the federal government and do all these grandiose, utopian things you call for. But you won't basically do the right thing and just say, "We've talked enough, we've debated enough. It's gone to committee, we've had amendments, we've listened to all the delegates from across the province," and you won't do the right thing and just say, "Let's vote and help families who have sick people at home. Let's vote on it."

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I don't know what happened there. I'm supposed to be responding to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I think he must have celebrated St. Patrick's Day yesterday. He's still celebrating.

My point, really, is this, though: This is another example of a government that will not use the legislative tools that they have to pass this bill. They have complete control—they have what they call a minor majority; they call it a major majority.

Interjection: It's a minority.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it's a minor—it's by one or two votes. They're being propped up by the NDP, to be fair now.

Bill 21, though, in itself is a bill that I have some compassion and reason to support. What is wrong here,

though? A good friend of mine, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Speaker, I want the people here to listen to me for a change.

The member from Eglinton–Lawrence went on a bit of a rant. I had a lot of time for him. He's a former minister. If he hadn't given out \$1 million to a soccer club he'd probably still be a minister.

Interjection: Cricket.

Mr. John O'Toole: Cricket, it was.

But here's the deal: He knows very well, having been a cabinet minister, that he could use the tools to make this debate go away. And I'm challenging you to use them. But at the same time do not deny the member from Kitchener–Waterloo or any other member of this House the opportunity to voice the views of their constituents. It's their democratic right.

Again I have great respect for the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. I do, and I've said that twice now, so you can use it in your next election brochure. But here's the deal: I have a family of five children and 10 grandchildren—caregiver leave. Now, in the committee, you did do the right thing—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me. Your time has expired.

The member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I think she did a great job debating the shortcomings of this bill. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence, although he's entitled to his opinion, spent the last 20 minutes reading the newspaper and then complaining about us debating the bill over here.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo talked about enforcement. This government had the opportunity, when they were making amendments to the ESA, to make a lot of better amendments. Enforcement is a huge issue in this province around the ESA. If I use the recent example that was in the newspaper this week for Terri-Lynn Garrie, who was paid \$1.25 an hour when the minimum wage was \$6, \$8 and \$10 an hour because there was no enforcement at Janus Joan Inc. in St. Catharines. Ten intellectually disabled workers worked there for 10 years. They were wrongfully dismissed and had to go to the human rights commission. If the government had been doing their job, they would have had enforcement, and they would have enforcement out in manufacturing companies, in small businesses and large businesses across this province, but, instead, they allowed the disabled to be discriminated against by being paid \$1.25 an hour. This woman, after 10 years, was awarded \$142,000 in lost wages, \$20,000 in lost income and \$25,000 in damages because the province wasn't doing its job having enforcement.

In a case where you can't even get your wages, do you actually think that the government is going to put in enough ministry enforcement officers to make sure that people who may be entitled to sick leave—it will be a very small number because it only applies to full-time

people—are actually going to get sick leave or caregiver leave off to look after their loved ones? I—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

The minister has the floor.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Good morning, Speaker. I have to tell you, when I came in this morning, I was surprised and saddened to learn that we're still going around the horn on this bill. Here we are at third reading. I've been told we've had 13 hours of debate getting to second reading, and we've had five hours of debate at the third-reading stage here.

The reality is, it's not just us who want to see this go to a vote now; it's our stakeholders on this. I know the Heart and Stroke Foundation, for example, has met with I think every member of the Legislature, indeed every member of the opposition. They came away with the impression that the opposition was ready to go on this bill too. So I'm really perplexed and puzzled why we're still here debating this. I think everyone has had their voice on this, sometimes multiple times.

0930

This is an important bill. It's part of a broader strategy to help families in Ontario, and it's a great opportunity for those to take a leave. They don't have to take the whole leave, as proposed in the bill. They can take a portion of the leave, so they can be with their loved ones in a time of need.

As I said, I'm very confused. Why are we here? Why are we still debating this? I think the member for Eglinton–Lawrence showed his passion for the importance of the bill. He's trying to persuade our colleagues here to get on with it, to listen to what the stakeholders have said. They have also said, "Let's get on with this."

Every day that we keep going around the horn here on this, we are not getting closer to making this a reality for families. We need to stop stalling, and we need to start voting on this, in my view. I'm asking people to stop putting up speakers, so that we can have a vote. I think there are some good suggestions that we can take forward. So let's move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, the member from Durham, the Minister of Consumer Services and my colleague here from Welland.

It's interesting that there's such bluster from that side of the House because, prior to Christmas, they worked with the PC caucus and, through a programming motion, tried to fast-track a number of pieces of legislation. When they tried to get something done for one company, EllisDon, they were able to fast-track and accelerate their own personal interests. Yet when I stand up in this House and point out the weaknesses of this piece of legislation, they cry foul. It is hypocritical and it is tiresome, and it's the kind of cynical politics that people in the province are tired of.

When we stand up and we point out what the weaknesses are in this piece of legislation, and then we give

you options to try to fix it—for instance, there are no maximum monetary limits on claims to be dealt with. There's a two-year limitation period to file a complaint. There are two-year entitlements to claim unpaid wages and vacation. You could have addressed this. You could have done this.

Once again, though, the Liberal government brings a weak piece of legislation to this Legislature. Just with the optics, all that that side of the House is concerned about doing is looking like they are getting something done. I'm telling you something: The people of this province see right through it, and it's our job to make sure they see it. They see you for who you are.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to have been asked to speak to Bill 21 here today. It's an important bill and one that our party supports.

Bill 21, Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), 2014, proposes several amendments to the current Employment Standards Act to correlate with some similar changes that the federal government has made to the Canada Labour Code.

Our caucus is glad to see that changes our party presented when this bill was originally introduced as Bill 30, the Family Caregiver Leave Act—we're pleased to see our changes incorporated.

The government, in their usual manner, did not properly consult on the original bill with stakeholders, or with the small business community in particular. This is a common theme with this government, as I have outlined in this House on several occasions. I am going to give you some examples now.

Just as with Bill 21, the government didn't properly consult on the Ontario Northland issue, one of the issues that affect so many people throughout northern Ontario. One day, almost exactly two years ago this month, we heard that Ontario Northland was going to be put on the chopping block—a fire sale—with absolutely no consultation, much like Bill 21. We found that they had no consultation, in their typical style. It was quite a shocking revelation throughout all of the north, and here we are, two years later, and it's still not resolved—

Ms. Soo Wong: A point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): A point of order.

Ms. Soo Wong: The member from Nipissing is supposed to talk about Bill 21. I don't know how the Northlander has anything to do with Bill 21. I just want some clarity about that, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Oh, I'll explain.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member needs to be reminded that his remarks have to be relevant to the bill being debated.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. The point I'm making is that there was absolutely no consultation on the original bill with stakeholders—on Bill 21—or with the small business community. I realize that the

Liberals do not like to talk about the punishment that they inflicted on northern Ontario through the devastating fire sale of Ontario Northland. I can understand why they don't want me to speak about that. I am making a comparison, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): A point of order.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Madam Speaker, we're not talking about the bill under debate, which is what we're supposed to be doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm mindful of that and I ask the member to continue.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. Again, what I'm trying to do here is to illustrate that the government did not properly consult with the original stakeholders or the small business community, exactly the same thing that they did to Ontario Northland and to members of the north. So that point being made, let me move on to the second comparison.

Just as with Bill 21, the government didn't properly consult with the stakeholders on the Lake Nipissing walleye limit reductions in northern Ontario either.

Just as with Bill 21, the government didn't properly consult on the Far North Act when they devastated the mining and logging communities by taking half of northern Ontario off of the participation list in logging and forestry, which has crippled the mining industry and devastated the logging industry. There are 60 mills that are now closed throughout the north; 80% of all of the mills are closed because they had lack of consultation. We have mining companies now that have left northern Ontario for other mining jurisdictions.

Just as with Bill 21, where they did not properly consult, they obviously did not consult the general public when they proceeded to cancel the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants, which we have now learned cost us \$1.1 billion.

Speaker, I think you're starting to get the picture of this government's inaction in terms of consulting with people in advance. They didn't do it with the horse racing industry. The list could go on and on to make a comparison back to Bill 21.

Previously, my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex highlighted the lack of consultation with the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association, in particular; however, we can see now they have followed through on making significant changes and improvements to this bill. They did come back with a better bill. That's what consultation gets you. That's what talking to your partners can get you.

Bill 21 will help in eliminating the inconsistencies that exist between our federal labour code and the provincial labour laws. As of June last year, the federal government started paying out benefits for what is the federal equivalent of the proposed critically ill child care leave. Additionally, as of January 2013, they have also begun implementing grants for 35 weeks for the equivalent of the proposed crime-related child death or disappearance leave.

Bill 21 would not incur any additional costs provincially. It would just protect the job from being terminated. Of course, we're interested in putting families first. I think we all know of families or we've had family members who have faced personal health issues and can certainly understand why this bill is important and why it's important to debate.

In Ontario, there are currently only two forms of leave available to workers that are protected under the Employment Standards Act: the family medical leave and the personal emergency leave. Under the current federal Employment Insurance Act, six weeks of employment insurance benefits may be paid to eligible employees under this leave. The family medical leave is an unpaid job-protected leave up to eight weeks within a 26-week period.

In order to be eligible, a qualified health practitioner must issue a certificate stating that an individual to be cared for has a serious medical condition and has a significant risk of death occurring within a period of 26 weeks. The personal emergency leave gives some employees the right to take up to 10 days of unpaid, job-protected leave each year due to injuries, illnesses and certain other emergencies or urgent matters. This type of leave would only be eligible for individuals who work for a company that regularly employs more than 50 employees.

0940

Bill 21 includes the introduction of new types of leaves, and that's why it's so important to be talking about this, and that's why it was so important to have brought this in advance and consulted in advance. The family caregiver leave offers up to eight weeks unpaid per year; the critically ill child care leave for up to 37 weeks for parents caring for a critically ill child; and a crime-related death or disappearance leave of up to 104 weeks for employees whose child dies as a result of a crime, or up to 52 weeks for employees whose child disappears as a result of a crime. The family caregiver leave mirrors the family medical leave in many ways; however, it does not include the provision of significant risk of death within a 26-week period.

It's important that this bill brings Ontario legislation in line with the federal legislation that was passed some time ago. We would like to see some important flexibility put into this program because it is fairly restrictive in the time frames, and I believe some of this was addressed at committee. One aspect of this bill is to keep seniors in their homes and allow that to happen. Of course, giving people the opportunity to take a leave from their job to care for a loved one—as I said, we've all had family members or friends of our families who have had to face health issues and challenges on that front.

The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association raised some issues with this, particularly around the days off. It could impact production in any manufacturing facility. I'm hoping the government will take that into account and work with them on this issue. Again, that's all to do with consulting with your partners, your stake-

holders, the members of the public, the business community who are going to be involved in these decisions. We can't afford for Bill 21 to have a negative impact on the manufacturing sector, especially now when we have 600,000 men and women who woke up this morning without a job.

Since 2003, it has been said many, many times: Ontario has lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs, at the same time adding over 300,000 government workers to the payroll. Of course, taxpayers simply cannot afford to pay that cost and the burden of those extra workers.

The current government has erected a number of barriers to new jobs, including layers of unnecessary red tape and one of the highest costs of government in North America. We must ensure that Bill 21 doesn't throw up any more barriers to business and business expansion. We cannot put new barriers in front of businesses and in front of job creators. I urge the government just to be careful with these bills that they are bringing forward. We are at a critical time in Ontario's history. We've seen the impact—many of us, from all parties, travelled in the pre-budget consultations this year. We had eight communities that we visited collectively, and we all heard the same things: skyrocketing energy rates, high taxes and red tape. These are part of the impediments to business creation, and we're very concerned that Bill 21 not be added as part of the new burdens to business.

We hear and we talk of Kellogg's, Heinz and Caterpillar all leaving Ontario. They're still making cereal. They're still making ketchup. They're still making earthmoving equipment vehicles. They're just not making them in Ontario anymore. As I said, when all three parties toured Ontario, we saw skyrocketing energy rates, high taxes and red tape as three of the greatest burdens to starting businesses and maintaining businesses here in the province of Ontario, which is why we see Kellogg's, Heinz, Caterpillar—and I could use my last seven minutes just speaking about the companies that have left Ontario.

In the United States, we are seeing major corporations bring home production from abroad because they need highly skilled workers and because they want to produce closer to their customers. Even Chinese companies are starting to make their products here in North America. In Ontario, we need to bring companies back to the province of Ontario, but we have to first get the fundamentals right. This is a great opportunity for Ontario, Bill 21, but we are competing directly with other provinces and with US states, where lower taxes, lower power rates, streamlined—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I think just mentioning the bill and injecting that where there are other completely unrelated topics to the bill—I don't really think that's the spirit and intent of the standing order, Speaker. I think that our obligations are to speak to the bill or to vote on the bill, and I'd ask your consideration.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would remind the member of the point of order and to make sure that he puts it in the context of the bill.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I realize that the cabinet minister does not like hearing the truth about the state of Ontario that her government has created, Speaker. But I can tell you that—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Point of order, Speaker: Again, I'm suggesting that the standing orders be followed and that my motives are not questioned in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member, continue.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I realize that the Liberal government has created a skyrocketing-hydro-rates, high-taxes and red-tape regime, and Bill 21, if they were carefully listening to what I was saying—we want to make sure that Bill 21 doesn't add to the burden that this government has already created, that has caused 600,000 men and women to wake up this morning without a job, which caused 300,000 manufacturing jobs to be lost in Ontario.

Ontario's manufacturers require a champion who will ensure that power rates are competitive, that our provincial transportation system works well, that our schools and colleges educate people for the workplace of the 21st century, and that regulations that government imposes encourage competition and not deter it. Right now, we don't have those conditions here in Ontario. That's why I bring this up with respect to Bill 21: that we don't want to see it causing undue burden. We've heard from this government that hydro rates are going up another 42% in the next five years, and that surely is going to kill more jobs in the province and make life more unaffordable for seniors and for families impacted by Bill 21 who have loved ones at home who are sick.

I think that the bill speaks to the compassion that members of this Legislature have for the people we all represent. Whatever party we're with, we really feel for those families struggling and for those loved ones who are ill. Honestly, most would agree with the kind of initiative. Who wouldn't agree with the plan, as long as it's well thought out and it's not going to be harmful on the job creation side? When a person has an ill child or family member, we all think of them. We can sympathize with the stress that they are under. We hope every child is going to live a happy and healthy life, but that's not always the case. In these circumstances, it is important for all of us to show that type of compassion and understanding.

0950

It's good to see that we're showing more compassion to family members who unselfishly give up their time to care for a family member and that we are working to provide a level support for them to do so. A streamlined piece of legislation is something we can support, one that eliminates inconsistencies and duplications.

For an aging or critically ill person, it makes a lot of sense to have family members around to care for them, particularly because the reality is that there's a lack of

long-term-care beds in this province. It's a real concern here in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, I think it's a shame when front-line services are cut and what replaces front-line services is more government bureaucracy. I look at the LHINs sucking hundreds of millions of dollars out of front-line health care services right across the province just for the sake of a new bureaucracy.

Again, when dealing with the loss or disappearance of a child, it's time that it finally gets recognized as it does now in Bill 21. During this heartbreaking period for any parent who might end up in this situation, providing them time is not only compassionate, but it's absolutely the right thing to do. That's why our party has been very supportive of this government's piece of legislation.

This bill, as I said, which we are supporting, is important to many people in the province of Ontario, but there are major challenges that we have to address with this sitting of the Legislature. We've said that we need to clear the decks. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has been clear on that, that we need to get focused on what really matters in Ontario right now, especially after the losses at Heinz and Kellogg's. I would encourage this government to start looking at the deficit and the jobs crisis that they have created here in Ontario today.

I'm sure the Liberal members have to agree with me that everywhere you go—we all saw it on the pre-budget consultations—people are concerned about their jobs so they can care for their loved ones. Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act, proposes several amendments to the current employment standards to correlate with some similar changes made with the federal government.

Again, I say we're supporting this bill. I think that we need to always show a compassionate side for our loved ones and for our families. I wish that we would have had the consultation earlier in this rather than having the bill foisted on us with no consultation, as I said earlier—the same as we saw for Ontario Northland, the walleye fishing in the north, the tourism centres that were closed, the Far North Act. The list can go on and on, including the horse racing sector.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I listened carefully to the member from Nipissing, and he raised some concerns that had something to do with the bill in a roundabout way.

I'd like to use this opportunity to correct my record. Earlier I referred to this bill as Bill 30. It had been at one point, I think. It's Bill 21, and I'd like to correct my record on that.

It is interesting, though, about priorities. I think that the member from Nipissing sort of touched on this. Earlier we heard that the Liberals just want this to be done. But I would encourage them—and there was some outrage about the fact that we're still talking about the bill, debating the bill, pointing out weaknesses in the bill. That has taken quite some time. But earlier, the member from Eglinton—Lawrence—the Liberals need to organize

their legislative agenda, and I would respectfully suggest that. They last called this bill—

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, they're yelling.

They last called this bill for debate on December 3. If this bill was such a priority, why didn't it crack their legislative agenda until March 18? Once again, we are just seeing games from that side of the House.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: If it is such a priority for you, then why did it take so long to get to, March 18?

The member from Nipissing has raised some good concerns, though, around process and around consultation. As I mentioned in my earlier comments, we share the same concern. If you had truly done a thorough consultation on this piece of legislation, you would have heard some legitimate concerns around enforcement, which you have not included in the legislation.

So it is a small step, a small, small positive step, but it's just typical gamesmanship on the part of the Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me. I want to first off welcome and recognize amazing champions of families and community care in the assembly today. We've got Krista Orendorff, Cristin Napier and Sumi Shanmuganathan from the Heart and Stroke Foundation; Joanne Di Nardo, Kelly Gorman and Florentina Stancu-Soare from the Canadian Cancer Society. We have Delia Sinclair representing the Alzheimer Society, Gene Long representing SEIU, Abidah Lalani representing the MS Society as part of the Ontario Caregiver Coalition, and Natasha Mistry from the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada.

They're all here because they support this bill 100%. They are all here because they want to get this bill passed yesterday, Speaker, so that we can help our families. They have been—Speaker, I want to apologize to them on behalf of my colleagues from the opposition parties for their shameful behaviour of continuing to drag out this important piece of legislation. Hours and hours of debate: 13 hours of debate during second reading, two hours of committee and amendments to the bill that were proposed by the opposition parties at the committee level, and now five hours of third reading debate.

They're being told, these advocates—and I've worked with them again and again—"Oh, we support the bill. We want to pass that bill immediately." However, what we see is the same old filibustering tactics. That is not acceptable. That is not fair to these hard-working people who would rather be in the community right now serving so many of our families across the province, as opposed to sitting in the Legislature.

The time for partisanship is over. Let's vote for this bill now and help our families across the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened very carefully to the member from Nipissing, a colleague of mine. He was really trying to put the entire story together, kind of the pieces of a puzzle. I have great respect for the work he has done as our critic on finance, and that role exposes him to both the strengths of Ontario and the weaknesses.

What he was trying to say is that the most troubling part in Ontario is those 600,000 families that don't have a job. That causes stress. Part of what you're doing here in Ontario with some of these bills—and I think you're being disingenuous on this particular bill because it's actually a year; it was March 5, 2013, when it was introduced. If you really wanted to pass this very small bill—now, how poorly it was drafted. If you look at the third reading copy after it has been to committee, it's full of stroked-out sections and additions. So what we've done—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I give them full credit. At least the NDP are standing and bringing voice to—in their case, they spoke this morning about the inappropriate amount of enforcement provisions within this. That's something that should be dealt with in regulation, and the government, rather than just getting up and saying, "We've talked too much about it," should get up and actually add value to the discussion and say how you're going to enforce it. What are the fines? What resources are you putting into it? You're downloading this cost to the employers. That's who's paying it. It isn't costing you a nickel. You're giving it to the employers to pay it.

So take this debate seriously. Our finance critic, you've criticized him twice when he was trying to make it so important that Ontario has to have health in the economy so that families can get out from under the stress of looking at their hydro bill or whatever else is causing them grief in their family. Think of the seniors that you're punishing this past winter—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to correct my record, Speaker. Earlier in my comments, I mentioned two hours of committee hearings. I meant to say two days of committee hearings.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Further comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I thought it was nice that you raised all the groups that are here, particularly the one around heart and stroke. I can tell you that I've used the Heart and Stroke Foundation when I had my open-heart surgery, and the importance that they are to the community, so maybe you can take it back to say thank you. I'm here today because of the good work that Heart and Stroke did when I needed their time.

1000

Having said that, during that time of illness I needed a family member to take care of me. When I came home from the hospital, it was hard for me to walk five steps. I needed somebody to make sure I took my pills, to make sure I got to the washroom okay, helped me do the five steps and take me outside—to make sure that I was doing all those things. That meant that one of my family members had to take time off work. I had to rely on an employer who would have to say that they could take the time off work for the five days. She works in a unionized environment—she's a principal, so it was easy, quite frankly, for her to take the time off. They allowed her to take as much time off as she needed. In this particular case, it ended up being a couple of weeks so that I could take care of myself after a couple of weeks.

But the problem you have—and this is why it was so important that the enforcement part was talked about. In a unionized environment, it may be a little easier to get time off because you have a collective agreement. You have a number of things that you can do. In a non-union workplace, how do you get the time off? In that same circumstance, using myself as an example, the employer could say no. The enforcement language that's in place here isn't strong enough to make sure that the employer can't say no. That has been the concern—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time is up.

The member for Nipissing has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to thank the members from Kitchener—Waterloo and Niagara. I want to thank the Minister of Labour.

I particularly want to thank our member from Durham for speaking on the supplementary. The member from Durham talked about getting the fundamentals right, and that's what I wanted to use these last moments to talk about.

We are supporting Bill 21. Let's get that very clear. What we are saying is, they brought this out without consultation, without talking to the stakeholders. That's the point I want to end with, that's so very, very critical. I understand the personal attack. I don't have any difficulty with that.

I know that, yesterday, I disclosed, through the Focus on Finance piece, the new secret documents that we developed. I brought them to this Legislature yesterday; I'll be bringing them back again today. I can understand why they like to shoot the messenger. That's their way. I understand that. I'm used to that from the Liberal government. It happens to be part of my role, first as energy critic and now as finance critic, to be on the receiving end of these secret documents.

I like to talk about those because they tell you what's really in their hearts and minds over there, being told one thing and spreading a complete opposite story as truth. That's the problem we have. We know that's what this government does, being told one thing and saying some-

thing completely opposite to the stakeholders, to the financial community and to the bond-rating agencies.

So I understand why they yell and heckle and can do that. It doesn't hide the very fundamental that they brought a bill without consultation. It's about the 10th time they've done that since I've been here in only two and a half years and, quite frankly, they don't like being exposed for that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Actually, it's truly my pleasure to stand up here today and contribute to this debate on Bill 21. The reason for that is, I want to exercise my democratic right as the representative of London-Fanshawe constituents who asked me to come here and give them a voice to every bill that's presented in this House.

The reason I say that—and there's no disrespect to the organizations that are here today to see that this bill moves forward and gets voted on. I absolutely want this bill to move forward. I also support this bill, as the New Democratic Party members do here in this House.

But there is a process that we must follow. It's a democratic process that we set up here in Canada, in Ontario, and that's what I believe in. So I want to have a voice on this bill. It was introduced, and I know that it's gone for first reading. I also know it went to second reading and then it went back to committee, where a lot of important work was done. But if we continue to push, to rush debate, what is the next bill that we're going to rush through? We have to set a line of standards when we have bills, and the standards have been set in Queen's Park, in the Legislature, of how and when and where to debate bills, and this is the place. So please allow every member in this House to stand up and speak to this bill as they see fit.

The government here—there's a lot of filibustering. They accuse the opposition parties of filibustering: absolutely not. Do not accuse a member of filibustering when they wish to sincerely and passionately speak to an important bill.

You obviously want to push this bill through. We believe that this is a good thing for family members, but we also, again, have concerns. So even though the bill has gone to committee and has gone through those amendments, it doesn't mean it's a perfect bill. It doesn't mean that we agree with the entire concept of this bill.

We agree with the principle of the bill. We all know that family members take ill and that there aren't enough home care supports in place to help our family members when they're ill. Therefore, a lot of that responsibility falls back to adult children, parents, grandparents etc.

This is not the first time—and we have to clear this up. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo brought it up, and I was going to state this as well: This is not the first time this bill has been presented in the House. The member who is the Minister of Municipal Affairs brought it forward—excuse me, the labour minister at the time brought it forward; she is now the municipal affairs min-

ister—but that bill got dropped, taken off the table. The reason—we forget why that was—was because the Liberal government—

Interjection: Prorogued.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, they prorogued. Why did they prorogue this Legislature, Speaker? Not in the interests of the people of Ontario, not in the interests of my constituents of London-Fanshawe, but in the interests of the Liberal government leadership race. That's the reality.

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's because they were embroiled in a scandal.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The member from Welland has mentioned the embroiled scandals. But I don't want to use that as a theme. What I want to add to the discussion is, I want to add my voice to the debate because I believe it's important to discuss amendments after a bill goes to committee. It's incumbent upon us to discuss those amendments and whether or not they've actually accomplished what this bill is intended for, the purpose of this bill at the time that it went to committee and how it came back—what it looks like now.

It went to committee. We made some changes. Now what does it look like? What are our comments and our debate towards this bill? That's what we're here doing today.

I see the organizations are nodding, and they agree. They agree that, yes, we should be talking about these amendments and do they serve the purpose of this bill. Do they serve the purpose of the people it's intended to affect? That's what I'm going to speak about today.

I also want to talk about maybe, from my perception, how someone stands up in this House and presents their argument, fact, debate.

I see the member from Ottawa—Centre?

Interjection: South.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:—South nodding his head. For me, if someone stands up and speaks clearly and respectfully and has facts and is thoughtful, I listen. My ears open up and I listen. For a member who's show-casing, flailing their hands, altering their voice up and down, almost like they're shouting at another person, for me, I lose the subject matter of what they're talking about. If we really want to have a fulsome, considerate debate, let's speak in a tone where people are going to open their ears and listen to what we have to say, because the member from Kitchener-Waterloo pointed out very clearly that it feels like cynical politics. It feels like games they're playing when they're yelling and screaming across the way, pointing their finger and accusing us, or accusing members, of filibustering and not respecting the fact that organizations are here and want this bill passed today. Speaker, I just want to point that out.

1010

When people speak in a way that they actually draw people in, that's when people listen. I don't know how the people who are watching us today, sitting on their couches in their living room, are receiving messages when they hear a respectful tone and information and the

sincerity of a member when they speak, as opposed to someone who's maybe grandstanding—and political posturing—trying to make someone else look like they're not sincere in this debate. I don't know how that comes across, but that's just my thought.

I also want to say that I listened to the member from Niagara Falls and that story. That is the perfect example. Here we have someone who had a very fatal sickness, a heart attack issue, and was at home and needed help. I'm not sure why the home care piece maybe didn't work out, but if that's the case—you often hear those stories. We get a lot of calls in my community office about the lack of getting home care when they need it.

I did present a five-day home care guarantee in this House. It's crucial, when you have someone—as the member from Niagara Falls had a situation—with a heart issue, she or he cannot wait more than five days to have that home care. If he was in rural Ontario, that could have been a grave problem, because they wait for home care an exorbitant amount of time, compared to people in urban areas.

His spouse, his partner, worked for a public education system that allowed them to have that flexibility to take time off. That's great—two weeks that they needed, to get a helping hand, to get back on their feet.

I'm very pleased that we have the member from Niagara Falls here in good health. That probably made the world of difference, that he was able to have that one-to-one care from his family member.

The other thing I want to talk about is what I have personally experienced through someone I know who is going through a very, very difficult, rough patch in their life right now. This woman is fairly young, and her family has been having issue after issue after issue and would require this time off to help with family medical problems, with family traumatic problems.

I noticed that one of the amendments that was brought to committee originally—it's been stroked out here—was that the employee had to take full-week periods. This is why this debate is very important, because we can actually highlight. Organizations probably were part of that committee process and gave their feedback, but the public wasn't. Employees weren't, perhaps. They're working; they can't come and listen every day to committee depositions. They may not have the time to go to the Hansard and find out what those amendments were. That's our job. That's our job, to communicate what those amendments look like after the committee process has happened, and this is what this opportunity is all about.

I encourage the Liberal government members to stand up and talk about those amendments and how they benefit people or maybe if there's a weakness to those amendments—

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: That's right.

Please don't filibuster yourselves and accuse other members of holding up debate and pushing this vote through. That's not what it's about today. Today it's

about talking about the amendments that happened in committee and how they affect this bill, and how they affect the general public, and employees specifically, who are working and need that time off to look after family members. Speaker, that was one of the amendments: striking out that employees must take time off a week at a time.

When I looked at the amendments, I went to the table in the Legislature and I said, “Well, okay, I've looked through this. I see that that has been taken out. Where is the replacement piece to that?” Is there another condition somewhere in this bill that says they have to take two weeks off at a time, three days off at a time, eight weeks off at a time? Lo and behold, there wasn't a replacement clause in that time.

Speaker, did you want to stand? I anticipate that you might be—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I was waiting for you to come to at least the end of the sentence.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It is close to 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to welcome the Grain Farmers of Ontario, including Chair Henry Van Ankum, who are here today at Queen's Park. I hope that all members will take time to speak with them at their reception this evening in room 228.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome Samantha Machado, a co-op student working at my office, a fourth-year Ryerson social worker.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome, for the third time, Julia Martin, and Elizabeth and Mike Martin from my riding of Ottawa Centre, who are the grandparents of Caroline Falkner and grandparents of our former page Amy Falkner. Welcome to Queen's Park.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Aujourd'hui, je voudrais présenter M. Denis Vaillancourt, le président de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, qui est avec nous et qui a reçu hier l'Ordre de la Pléiade, et sa vice-présidente Julie Lutete, qui est vice-présidente de minorités raciales et ethnoculturelles francophones de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted today to welcome, in the public gallery, Matt Boudreau from my office. He has family visiting from Davenport, Iowa: Paul Boudreau, Cole Boudreau and Grant Albansoder. Welcome.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome page Jane Oleksiw and her father, Bob Oleksiw, who is in the public gallery in this morning. Welcome.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I also want to welcome Joanne Di Nardo, Kelly Gorman and Florentina Stancu-Soare from

the Canadian Cancer Society, who are here in support of Bill 21.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to welcome Karen Laffrenier, proud mom of Callista Laffrenier. She's up in the public gallery. I don't know why she's there today, but welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? The member from—yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to introduce my brother Vince Marchese, who has not been here for a long, long time. He is a retired French teacher—something that, every now and then, I think I might have liked to have done for a lifetime, when we consider pensions or lack of them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member from Trinity-Spadina for his statement. I got thrown off; I apologize to the member for missing his riding.

On behalf of the MPP for Kenora-Rainy River, celebrating our page Mira Donaldson, mother Kelly Spicer and father Guy Donaldson are here visiting their daughter.

Also, on behalf of the Attorney General, Urooj Ali's mother, Naila Ali; father, Syed Muhammad Ali; and brother Ahmed Syed Bakhtiar are in the gallery visiting the pages.

Welcome, and thank you for being here.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finally, to all members—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's kind of funny when you say something out of context and everyone says, "Uh oh, what's going to happen?"

I'd like the pages to assemble to be introduced. Oh, somebody frogged. You guys realize that one of your colleagues is going to get teased for frogging? Okay.

I would like all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the second session of the 40th Parliament: Urooj Ali from Kingston and the Islands; Bani Arora from Bramalea-Gore-Malton; Zohaib Aslam from Mississauga-Erindale; Megan Barkey from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock; Anthony Bello from Vaughan; Calvin Devries from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound; Divya Dey from Etobicoke Centre; Mira Donaldson from Kenora-Rainy River; Caroline Falkner from Ottawa Centre; Simon Hopkins from Ajax-Pickering; Nusaybah Khan from Scarborough-Rouge River; Justin Kim from Don Valley West; Nicholas Lacoste from Kitchener-Conestoga; Callista Laffrenier from Timiskaming-Cochrane; Mustfah Madlol from London West; Kathryn Nicol from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke; Isabella O'Brien from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale; Jane Oleksiw from Niagara Falls; Jonah Opler from Eglinton-Lawrence; Eli Park from Parkdale-High Park; Milana Thibodeau Morris from St. Catharines; and Samantha Unger from York Centre. These are our pages.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Get back to work. The Minister of Finance on an introduction.

VISITORS

Hon. Charles Sousa: It gives me great pleasure to introduce members of the Ontario Securities Commission who will be joining us this morning. That includes Howard Weston, the chair of the Ontario Securities Commission, as well as Aly Vitunski and Blair Stransky. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If there are no further introductions, it is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to ask a question today to the Acting Premier.

Less than a day after your government announced it would be bringing forward accountability and transparency legislation, you announced the appointment of Sandra Pupatello, a former leadership candidate for your party and a McGuinty Liberal cabinet minister, to chair the embattled Hydro One. This took place without a public process and without an application process.

She is set to make \$150,000 a year or, based on last year's schedule, \$3,800 an hour. This is at a time when most Ontarians cannot afford to pay their hydro bills and when jobs are leaving this province by the tens of thousands. Ontarians are rightfully cynical over this patronage appointment.

I asked yesterday, given that the Ontario PC government would fire Sandra Pupatello, will this government expose what they have said they would pay her in severance?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have two agencies in particular that have had chairs who have been in place for upwards of 10 years, Mr. Speaker. In the normal course, we would replace chairs who have been in place that long.

We did look at the abilities of a number of people. I would say, first of all, with respect to Ontario Power Generation, we appointed Bernard Lord, former Premier of New Brunswick, who had tremendous experience and who incidentally has Conservative ties, I believe. We're very proud of that Conservative appointment, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. John Yakabuski: CYA. CYA.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We're very proud of that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you're finished.

Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If the Liberals had a Senate, Sandra Pupatello would be the government leader in the Senate.

We're tired, on this side, of Liberal government hacks. The sense of Liberal entitlement has worn very thin. I didn't hear what he is paying not only Sandra Pupatello in her severance, but also Bernard Lord, who this caucus does not think is fit to run the OPG.

Not only are they going to be forced to pay for these exorbitant salaries, as well as severances they are not prepared to disclose, but yesterday the energy minister tied the natural gas increase to hydro rates at the OEB. For a minister that says the OEB chooses rates on its own, it was interesting he would contradict himself when he left question period.

But let's have a refresher on Liberal energy policy: the billion-dollar gas plant scandal, \$20-billion failed green energy plan, exporting energy at a loss of a billion dollars and now Sandra Pupatello's expensive energy policy. I'd call that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. I stand, you sit.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I quite enjoy the questions I get from my Conservative critic, because there's usually a diatribe that involves six or eight or 10 issues, which you couldn't possibly answer in a question. I have to play "What will I answer today, of all the things she indicated?" I'll get back to her main question.

Sandra Pupatello has served this province and served this government extremely well. She has served in a number of different ministries, including community and social services, economic development and others. She has had the responsibility of managing ministries that have huge budgets. She has been interested, very much so, in service to the public. She has economic experience as Economic Development Commissioner for the city of Windsor. She has also been a senior adviser to KPMG, a business consulting firm. We are proud of that appointment and I really, really think that that's a—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock.

From memory: the Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order; the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry will come to order; and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order. I also believe it was the member from Simcoe North.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did, and I'm hearing the member from Halton now. I'll get you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If the minister wants to know why I have so much loaded in my questions, it's because

they have a 10-year record of failure in energy, adding only to the expensive appointment of a Liberal hack, who he wants to repay after she lost the leadership of their party and whom he supported.

We are the only party in this assembly that is committed to reducing hydro bills. We have said we would monetize OPG and Hydro One and make them accountable so it wouldn't be the Senate for Liberal hacks. We have said we would end the expensive FIT program to the tune of \$20 billion a year for 1% of hydro that it's producing and we said we would deal with the oversupply by creating sensible energy plans. I would stack Tim Hudak's plan against their plan any day.

Will they have the guts to go to the polls and put those two energy plans in place and let the voters decide on which path they want to take? Sandra Pupatello and Kathleen Wynne's—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I give the opposition credit for bringing forward white papers on their energy policy. One of their policies is to privatize Ontario's Power Generation, which they tried to do back around 2002. Here's what the Toronto Sun said about their initiative, which is in their white paper today: "Instead, it led to the exact opposite" of price reduction. "Rates skyrocketed amid rampant Tory patronage, and the Conservatives, faced with rising public fury, abandoned the scheme, leaving a financial disaster in their wake." That's from their paper, the Toronto Sun.

Also, the million-dollar act that they initiated: They will cancel existing contracts and expose the province to \$20 billion in claims.

Their policies were a disaster, are a disaster. They don't deserve to be elected.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, last week, your Minister of Economic Development and Trade rubber-stamped the compulsory certification of carpentry. Basically, he did that without any knowledge of the industry, saying that the decision had already been made. That is in contrast to you and the Ontario College of Trades, who claim that compulsory certification of carpentry is industry-driven.

Minister, is the compulsory certification of carpentry a done deal, and is your government about to rubber-stamp a deal that will cripple the construction industry in Ontario and cost tens of thousands of jobs right here in Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Of course not, Mr. Speaker. We set up the College of Trades so that these decisions could be made in an evidence-based, rational environment, unlike the party opposite, whose view is that these decisions should be made in backrooms at the Albany Club. That's the way the decisions were made in the past—not in the future. We respect the skilled trades more than that.

We believe that these decisions ought to be made by people who are involved in the skilled trades, who understand the challenges involved, who understand the impacts on the skilled trades, who understand the impacts on the economy, who understand the impacts on Ontarians. That's why we set up the College of Trades, Mr. Speaker.

So in answer to the member's question, of course not. That's the decision, ultimately. If an application were to come forward, it would go through the proper process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, at least they're not making the decision in Pat Dillon's living room.

Minister, the compulsory certification of carpentry is really only supported by one group, and that's the Carpenters' Union.

We all know that the membership in the Ontario College of Trades is nothing more than a new trades tax. You know that; the whole province knows that.

The third party, the NDP, clearly do not support any new "taxes, tolls or fees" on the working class. The Labourers' union, LIUNA, detests the compulsory certification of carpentry. So my question is, are you prepared to cripple the construction industry in Ontario by rubber-stamping the compulsory certification of carpentry, or will you side with the NDP and LIUNA and demand no new taxes and save thousands of jobs right here in our province?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It really is time for the member to start travelling with Ontarians and start talking factually about what the College of Trades is about and stop trying to say things that simply aren't in keeping with the facts. If he's got a good argument, he can make that argument by factually making that argument, rather than making things up.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the College of Trades is set up to deal with these kinds of issues. These are challenging decisions. They have to be made in a rational environment. They have to be evidence-based. They have to consider impacts on the economy, they have to consider impacts on Ontarians and they have to consider impacts on the skilled trades.

In the past, these decisions were made in government backrooms or not made at all and ignored. We've set up a structure now that allows for an evidence-based consideration of these decisions. That, I think, is the way of the future. That respects the skilled trades. That ensures—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Someday, Minister, I'd like to give you a briefing on the trades in Ontario. You might learn from it.

Minister, I understand the wedge you are put in here.

The Ontario College of Trades is nothing more than a new trades tax.

Speaker, even today, tens of thousands of hairstylists formed a new association and have joined the Stop the Trades Tax campaign with a new Cut the Salon Tax campaign.

With thousands of apprentices and journeyperson candidates about to be put out of work on April 8, and with your compulsory certification of carpentry about to kill tens of thousands of construction jobs here in Ontario, and with a bunch of cop wannabes harassing the tradespeople of Ontario, and now with a new Cut the Salon Tax, don't you think it's about time you actually listened to me and joined with Tim Hudak and the PC caucus and abolished this pathetic College of Trades once and for all?

Interjections.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I listen to the member every time he gets up. The problem is, what he says isn't in keeping with the facts. So I can listen until the cows come home, but I'm waiting to hear something sensible from the member that's really going to help us drive forward the skilled trades, help us build stronger skilled trades in this province. If we had listened to the member opposite when it comes to ratios between apprentices and journeypersons, we would have ended up exactly where we were under them when they were in government, where they had zero reductions in trade ratios. Since we've been in office, since the College of Trades has been in place, they've reduced trade ratios by 14. That's a pretty significant difference in approaches.

We're getting things done. We're doing it in an evidence-based, rational way, allowing tradespeople to have the respect to be able to self-govern their own industry. We have confidence in those decisions. We have confidence they can do the job. It's too bad that you don't.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Middle-class families are feeling squeezed like never before, and they're worried about jobs. They see Ontario's unemployment rate stubbornly stuck above the national average and paycheques that just don't keep up with the cost of living. Does the Acting Premier think that the status quo is actually acceptable?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can say is that there is no party in this House that has a monopoly on caring for people who are struggling every day to pay their bills. On this side of the House, we have taken action to reduce costs for people who are in that middle class. Some of those examples would be the work we're doing to reduce auto insurance. We've reduced that by 4.66% on average

since August of last year. We've expanded the 30% off tuition grant, so 230,000 students received that grant last year, and we've now expanded access to five-year programs and private career colleges.

One of the most important things we can do is secure a retirement security. We are very committed to doing that, and the party opposite is silent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Before people can retire, they need a job. People struggling to find work are very tired of hearing Liberals insist that their plan is working. The government insists that the HST and corporate tax giveaways would create jobs, but people keep seeing local plants close. The government insists they can work with employers to bring investments, but businesses like Cliffs Resources and Chrysler are walking away from the table. The Premier insists that she's the change, so why does the government keep sticking to the same old status quo?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are anything but sticking to the status quo, and I would ask the leader of the third party to actually come clean with the people of Ontario on what exactly their plan is. When it comes to pension security, they have no plans. They remain silent on that issue. When it comes to energy, they voiced opposition to high rates, but they have no plan to bring those rates down. When it comes to transit, which our middle-class families depend on, you have absolutely no plan, or you have a multitude of positions. So I really think it's important that the leader of the third party actually come clean with the people of Ontario and express what their plan is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think they know our plans very, very well, because they keep implementing them. People want a better future, but we won't get there with the same old approaches. People want to see competitive electricity rates to help attract business. Instead, they see the same bloated system that pays millions to executives and dumps discounted electricity into competing jurisdictions. They want to see tax incentives that reward businesses putting people back to work. Instead, they see tax loopholes that help CEOs write off a night on the town.

The Premier says she wants to do things differently, but all she's offered to do is promise to raise gas taxes and the HST and then frantically scramble in the other direction. Do the Liberals really think this is good enough for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: You don't have to take it from me. The facts are, the NDP is nowhere on important issues. Let me quote from the Toronto Star, February 16: "Horwath has done everything possible to avoid having policies on tough issues that require political bravery."

On March 15, 2014: "Ontario NDP Losing Its Voice on Minimum Wage."

The Globe and Mail says, "But there's no denying Ms. Horwath has taken the accent off the NDP's traditional focus on anti-poverty...."

"And what about Horwath's response to Wynne's push for a made-in-Ontario pension plan? Silence," from the Toronto Star on February 16.

I think it's time that the NDP said where they stand.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Acting Premier as well. No-strings-attached giveaways have handed out a lot of money, but there's not much evidence that they've created many jobs. In fact, most of that money has been stockpiled. It's clear that we need a better approach in this province.

Unconquered Sun, a manufacturer in Windsor, told us, "The NDP plan for a new job creation tax credit is a smart, simple idea that will help me grow." Are the Liberals ready to try a new approach that will give a boost to companies that are ready to put people to work?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, let me just share some good examples, and I know the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment will want to speak.

Cisco Systems is adding 1,700 high-tech jobs over six years, with the potential for 5,000 jobs, and we're investing \$190 million over six years to leverage \$4 billion. I call that a success.

Ford Oakville, Speaker: We're partnering with the federal government and Ford of Canada to upgrade the Oakville assembly plant. That's securing 2,800 jobs.

Toyota in Cambridge, 400 new jobs; Original Foods in Dunnville, 150 new jobs; Conestoga Meat Packers in Breslau, 425 existing jobs retained, 100 new jobs; CenterLine in Windsor, 482 jobs; and the list goes—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Sutherland's Furniture is a London, Ontario, success story, and they want to grow. Vivianne Dupuis of Sutherland's Furniture told us that they've been thinking about whether they can afford new hires, and this is exactly the sort of incentive that would help them make that decision in uncertain times. She says a job creator tax credit will "assist small businesses in growing their operation and, in turn, growing the local economy."

What does the government have to say to Vivianne and business people like her?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know this idea of a job creators tax credit has been around with the NDP for a long, long time. I know they were initially thinking of a 20% credit to the employer, and then it went down to 10%. I have no doubt it may actually end up being 0% in the not-too-distant future.

This is part of the reason I wish they had actually read the report of the Jobs and Prosperity Council, which was chaired, of course, by the esteemed Gord Nixon, the president and CEO of RBC.

Here they are. Here's the Jobs and Prosperity Council report saying that for the proposed tax credit, the NDP tax credit—the JPC indicated that a number of considerations “need to be taken into account in coming to a balanced view of its merits and risks.... Taken together, these considerations suggest that the proposed tax credit entails significant fiscal risks and may not achieve the desired” outcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here we have the minister once again relying on the same old status quo, on a panel report that doesn't even talk about jobs at all. That's the problem, Speaker. That is exactly the problem. The Liberal status quo has kept Ontario's unemployment rate stubbornly above the national average, and that is not good enough.

Thalmic Labs is a venture-capital-funded start-up in the Communitech Hub in Kitchener–Waterloo. Stephen Lake, Thalmic Labs' CEO, had this to say about a job creator tax credit: “An incentive like the one being proposed would be helpful for companies like us as we continue to build out our teams.”

Now, are the Liberals going to stand by their same old status quo that they continue to flout as I ask these questions, or are they going to listen to businesses like the ones I've quoted today, that are ready to actually start creating jobs in our province?

Interjections.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Speaker, frankly, I can't believe that in a single sentence, the leader of the third party has tried to discredit the entire work of the Jobs and Prosperity Council, representing the business leadership right across this province and chaired by Gord Nixon, who was at that time the president and CEO of RBC. I find that, frankly, quite unbelievable.

She references Communitech as well. Communitech is a job creator. It has created probably as many as 10,000 jobs, with government support, over the last number of years, and the examples that she gives—and it's not just the Jobs and Prosperity Council. The evidence shows—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Finance. In yesterday's Focus on Finance presentation, we had an insider's look into the secret workings of the Liberal Party.

Last year, when your finance officials told you one thing, you immediately went out and told the bond-rating agencies something completely opposite. We also saw that you blacked out many emails, labelling them “commercially sensitive information.”

Let's take a look at what you were covering over: “No funding for incremental compensation increases for new collective agreements; salaries for designated groups frozen until 2017-18.” Minister, you voted against our across-the-board wage freeze when you were secretly planning to do the same thing. What else are you hiding?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the audacity of the members opposite to suggest that we're hiding anything, when that is the party that hid \$5.6 billion in the election before 2003. And now they're referencing information that we delivered to the committee, recognizing that, yes, there are recommendations that are proposed and provided. We take them into consideration. Things change, revenues change; we recalibrate. We control our spending to offset them, and we've been very open and transparent, because we put it in our fall economic statement six months later. The facts are there. They never read it until today. They're pretty slow, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We've also discovered part of your plan is not to report any real numbers for as long as you can. With today's Fraser Institute report showing Ontario's debt situation is now actually much worse than California's, we now understand why. It also explains why, last October, you failed to disclose the long-range assessment as required by the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act.

When I asked you for this in the Legislature, you said, “We have a fall economic statement coming out shortly,” but guess what, Minister? There were no medium-term outlook numbers included in it. Not even your famous “recalibrated” numbers were in that report. The transparency act also states that third-quarter results must be published by February 15, something you also failed to provide this year.

Minister, again I ask you: What else are you hiding?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, here's a good quote: “[T]he provincial budget has been balanced for the past four years, with a fifth to come.” That was said by Tim Hudak when they showed a deficit.

This is not the case. We have been open and transparent. We will continue to do what's necessary. We have always been outlining—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. As soon as I sit down, I'll get right back up again if someone starts. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We'll continue to be open and transparent. We brought in laws to do just that. We are the ones who are coming out with our long-range plan. We've already identified that it will be coming forward.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville, the member from Oxford and the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Obviously, they don't want to hear the truth, Mr. Speaker, because this is what they said.

The former Provincial Auditor said this: “[T]he Tories, in their zeal to make the budget balance”—as required by Ontario law—“manipulated figures to ensure revenue appeared to match expenditures.” That was done in 2003.

We will continue to do what’s right.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Acting Premier: Late last week, we learned that Enbridge and Union Gas have applied for increases that in one fell swoop will increase the prices we pay for gas used to power our furnaces and hot water heaters by up to 40%. Now we learn that the Minister of Energy is musing about electricity prices going up more than 42%, indicated in the government’s long-term energy plan, because of high natural gas prices.

Is this government resigned to hard-pressed Ontarians paying electricity price increases that they just can’t afford?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I’ll talk about the gas prices in my response, and then I’ll talk about electricity prices in the supplementary.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, there is no flow-through of profit or margin on commodity cost of natural gas. There is a North American problem with escalating prices in natural gas and the gas companies flow that through.

They will go to the Ontario Energy Board. The Ontario Energy Board, which is mandated to protect the interests of consumers, will see what the prices were and what they did with those prices. They will make a decision. The increases that they apply for at the Ontario Energy Board are distribution costs, which they get locally. There’s no profit to the actual gas companies on the increase.

Mr. Speaker, I’ll finish that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, Ontarians want a government that speaks for them, not for the gas companies. You’ve got to understand that.

People understand that this was a cold winter, but winter is pretty much over and most of the gas used by gas plants is purchased under long-term contracts. Last week, in anticipation of warmer weather and a pickup in drilling, North American gas prices began to decline.

Will the government ensure that any application to increase electricity prices by gas generators is reviewed in a way that’s transparent, or is it resigned to ever-increasing hydro prices for hard-pressed Ontarians?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The issue is before the Ontario Energy Board, and as everyone in this chamber knows, that is an independent association. They look at the evidence. There’s the opportunity for consumer advocates and stakeholders to make representations. They deal with it in an open and transparent manner; that’s the way they deal with business. We cannot tell them what to do.

With respect to electricity prices, as I indicated last week in the House, Hydro-Québec does a comparative study every year of all the provinces and cities across the country. Here’s what they report for 2013: The price for electricity in Ottawa, 12.39 cents per kilowatt hour; Toronto, 12.48 cents; quickly, Edmonton, 13.9; Calgary, 14.8; Halifax, 15.45. We are competitive and we’re going to stay competitive.

HOME CARE

Mr. Steven Del Duca: My question today is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. As we look to the future, I believe most members in this House would prefer that we all have the chance to age with dignity in our own homes and with the supports that we need to keep all of us out of institutional care for as long as possible. I’m sure that every single one of us has an elderly loved one who has needed help in the tasks of daily living that we all tend to take for granted.

That’s why I was alarmed, along with many families and seniors in Vaughan and across York region, to recently hear the opposition Conservative member from Newmarket–Aurora say that high-risk seniors across York region are having their essential assisted living services cut.

Speaker, I’m wondering if the minister could please tell the House what is really happening in York region.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I’d like to thank the member from Vaughan for giving me the opportunity to clear the air on this matter and bring some comfort to the people of York region, who may have been led to believe that they will see a reduction in these vital supports.

As part of our action plan for health care, we are committed to ensuring that seniors get the right care at the right time and in the right place, and very often that is at home. So contrary to what the member from Newmarket–Aurora claims, our new assisted living for high-risk seniors policy will improve assisted living services for seniors who need them most and allow more seniors to get the care they need.

Under the old model, assisted living services were provided only in supportive housing buildings, so many clients did not have access to the 24/7 care that they needed, and unscheduled urgent visits. Now patients will be able to receive in-home personal support, home-making, security checks and care coordination, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, wherever they live.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I thank the minister for her thoughtful response, and I thank her for providing important clarity with respect to what’s really taking place. I’m sure many people living in my riding of Vaughan and across York region will be relieved to know that their assisted living services are not being cut. They’ll be delighted to know that, in fact, they’re being expanded.

However, I am sure that there will still be many seniors in the region who are concerned about the transition

to this new model. Some may be worried that these reforms will disrupt the care that they're already receiving.

Can the minister please inform the House what will happen to patients as this new policy is implemented?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Every patient currently receiving assisted living services will continue to do so under this new model. There will be no reduction in service, and with a \$5 million additional investment from the Central LHIN, there will be 625 additional assisted living spaces in the community. That means more seniors will receive the care they need to maintain their independence at home.

Providers are now working together to ensure continuity of care for all current assisted living seniors with high needs, and they're working with patients who are being transitioned to a new provider. For example, care supervisors from CHATS are meeting with York region's Alternative Community Living Program to best understand how to support each individual. So far, 80% of those one-on-one meetings have been completed, and we will continue to work with the LHINs to make sure people get the care they need in their own home.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: Speaker, my question is to the minister responsible for the Pan/Parapan Am Games. Oops, you did it again, Minister. Last Friday you told us with conviction that the total transportation costs were between \$75 million and \$90 million, yet yesterday in committee, TO2015 confirmed there's a second transportation plan nobody knew about worth \$32 million.

You've said that you're in charge of the games, but you can't be aware of all the details. Maybe you're unaware of the details because you don't attend your own technical briefings.

Minister, you're clearly not interested in being responsible for the Pan Am Games. Will you step down finally?

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, one more day, one more insult to the games. Back a few years ago, when Ontario bid for the games, one of the big requirements was the transportation of the athletes and family members. This is the responsibility of TO2015. The cost was allocated from the beginning. The cost is within the overall budget of \$1.441 billion. Our recent forecast decreased that amount in a saving of \$49 million.

Speaker, as host jurisdiction, Ontario is responsible for the traffic flow in general. We have a comprehensive transportation plan. It is workable. It is achievable. Vancouver did it. London did it—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Speaker, the biggest insult to these games is the fact that this government continues to play shell games with the numbers here. To be perfectly clear, the total transportation costs to date are between \$107 million and \$122 million, despite what you say, Minister. This is up from \$55 million—I don't know, who's counting? I am, by the way. It was the organizing com-

mittee's CEO, on the job for only 10 weeks, who shed light on your transportation planning.

What have you been doing all this time, Minister, if you can't be open and transparent? How can you be responsible? You've lost the confidence of the public to lead this portfolio, and you report to someone without a public mandate. Minister, I'm hard pressed to find anyone who knows less about the games than you do.

Will you remedy this finally and step down and let someone do it who can handle the job?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, the member opposite is completely out of touch with the games. In November last year, he actually asked when the last Pan Am Games were held. He complained the cost of the games was too high; at the same time, he said we were not spending enough on transportation and security. Most recently, he alleged that the TO2015 mascot was in Sochi and the Caribbean by looking at a picture of a six-inch stuffed animal toy.

Speaker, this is nonsense. The nonsense continues to hurt the games that are coming to Ontario. This nonsense hurts our athletes. This nonsense hurts our coaches. This nonsense hurts the spirit of the games.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The question is to the Minister of Transportation. Over 100 long days ago, I asked the government for crucial information about the most expensive transit projects under way. Earlier today, for the sixth time in a row, the government members in committee blocked this simple request. This Liberal government has an awful record on accountability, and they're doing nothing to fix it. They think it's okay to keep Ontarians in the dark about how public money is spent.

My question to the minister is this: What on earth is he afraid that we're going to find that will hurt him or his ministry?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I am appalled by the third party. This is a party that wants working women in Brampton who cannot get transit to get their kids to Sheridan to have to have an \$11,000 car because they won't support transit. These are people who are happy having people in Scarborough wait 40 minutes for a bus to get to work in the morning. These are people who take working families and marginal workers who work in office buildings downtown and don't provide them with transit.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek will come to order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is not the party of the middle class. This is the party of the indifferent and the elite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In case he didn't hear me, or while he was heckling didn't hear me, the

member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek will come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, when does this party care as much about people who ride buses as the insurance rates on people who drive BMWs? This is—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, all I have to say is that all that blah blah blah was not very helpful. We know that Ontarians want transit expansion, but they don't want to see more waste and cost overruns. We know that.

The people of Ontario have a right to see the true cost of transit projects, yet the Liberals are blocking the way. They have been stalling these motions for months. They've been refusing to be transparent and accountable to Ontarians.

Speaker, my question to the minister is this: Will he say to his MPP colleagues, "Stop the stonewalling in committee," and tell his ministry to release all the documents that the committee needs to see?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I don't know; I've been suspicious that the people in the third party have gotten so close to the party opposite that they're starting to behave like them: anti-transit.

The other habit they've taken that the Tories have is that they don't read budgets. The business plan for all 15 rapid transit projects and the funding models are all click, click on the website. Anything that he wants, he can find out from Metrolinx, and it's appeared.

I cannot help the third party's transit illiteracy. I understand that they don't understand that some people actually use buses and that, for middle-class families, the cost of transit is actually crushing them. While they love to talk about energy, in fact, transportation is the second-biggest household cost after food. But he doesn't care about that, and he wants to attack transit, not only not fund it, Mr. Speaker. Maybe he can read a report—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO SECURITIES COMMISSION

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Ontario is home to one of the largest financial sectors in North America, and Toronto has, in recent years, been declared one of the top destinations for foreign direct investment. Regulations for the financial sector are an important part of what has kept Ontario and Canada strong during recent years, in particular with the recession south of the border.

1120

Can the minister please inform the House about the regulation of Ontario's capital markets and the contributions of the Ontario Securities Commission?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood for this very important question. Ontario has a strong and successful financial sector,

and it secures our prosperity and our economy. Recent studies from the Conference Board of Canada and the Toronto Financial Services Alliance note that one in 13 Ontarians are directly employed by this sector and help grow Ontario's economy for many other sectors.

Smart regulations are an essential element of our government's approach to supporting the sector, as evidenced by our continued commitment to a dynamic and innovative business climate. The Ontario Securities Commission plays an essential role in regulating and safeguarding capital markets. They help protect investors from unfair or improper practices. They foster fair and efficient capital markets and confidence in Ontario. The OSC is a success story and an example to the world of how to effectively regulate capital markets to secure prosperity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister, for that important update. My constituents agree that Ontario needs strong, smart regulation for capital markets. We are pleased to see the OSC's efforts to protect investors and combat fraud.

I had the opportunity to attend a fraud prevention event on behalf of the Minister of Consumer Services in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, and I can tell you this is a real concern for my constituents. They also feel that the OSC must take a grassroots approach to promote financial literacy and combat fraud in our communities. Can the minister please update the House as to the OSC's work in local communities in this regard?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member is absolutely right: The OSC must work at the local level to combat fraud and offer educational initiatives for all Ontarians. That's why in February 2013, the OSC launched the OSC in the Community initiative with its Protect Your Money fraud prevention seminars. The OSC is touring cities across Ontario, educating investors on fraud prevention and financial literacy and raising the profile and understanding of the OSC as a whole. Thus far, the OSC has visited Thunder Bay, Kingston, London, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Peterborough, Brampton, Windsor, Ottawa and Barrie, with plans to visit four additional cities this winter. The OSC will be reaching out to all MPPs before they visit your community. These initiatives build relationships with local community groups, law enforcement agencies and small businesses. They help to enhance education and financial literacy, and they combat fraud at all levels.

I thank the OSC for their leadership in this regard and look forward to their new and innovative initiatives. I'd like to thank the chair, Howard Wetston, and his entire team for their tireless efforts in this regard.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Yesterday, in refusing to stop the closures of the Kemptville and Alfred

colleges, the Premier repeatedly said that the programs would continue.

Minister, you know that's not true. All the programs aren't moving several hundred kilometres away. Many of them will be disappearing. So the Premier, as Minister of Agriculture, really doesn't understand, or she doesn't care.

North America's leading organic dairy education and research centre in Alfred is disappearing, and so are hundreds of skilled trades positions at Kemptville college. Those positions are needed in the skilled trades.

Minister, can't you see that without a moratorium, you're going to destroy a tradition of post-secondary agricultural education that took almost a century to have?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I recognize the member is an opposition member, and I recognize that it's really easy for opposition members just to ask for anything and take the easy way out. But I really encourage the member to use as an example the work that the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has done to ensure that the Alfred campus remains working, remains open, that there's continuity there and that those students will be able to continue to take those courses.

He did that, Mr. Speaker, by working really hard to attract local partners. La Cité and Collège Boréal are going to step in. They have signed an agreement with Guelph university. That's good news. It's an example of how the local member can make a real difference.

I encourage the member opposite. We are looking very forward. We will work with him. My colleague will work with him to try to find local solutions to do the same thing at Kemptville.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: Come on, Minister. The only credible plan for these colleges is to have a moratorium. That's the only way forward. Right now, students at both Kemptville and Alfred are receiving letters telling them to reapply to Ridgetown. We're hearing from students in the Kemptville area who won't continue with their studies next year. They're going to drop out. One mom said that her son, who planned to enrol in Kemptville in the fall, is not going to take any other post-secondary position anywhere else. That's what happens when you destroy local agricultural education opportunities.

You're the minister responsible. Can you stand up and assure Ontario that we're going to have the same amount of spaces available for post-secondary agricultural educational programs if you decide to proceed with this plan? Can you tell me that?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Before the minister starts, I want to remind members that when the member was putting the question, I was still hearing heckling from this side, and I heard quiet. I ad-

monished anyone that got in the way of somebody putting the question. I expect the same courtesy when the answer is being given.

Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: There is quiet on this side when he's asking that question because it's an important and very valid question. It's something we care deeply about. The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, I think, has stood out in this particular situation by reaching out to partners in the local community and ensuring that the people that have to be first on our minds on this—our students—are being looked after at that particular campus. We would like to see a similar solution arrived at for Kemptville. We'll work hard with that member opposite. We'll work hard with the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell to see if a local partner can be identified that can continue those courses, but let's be clear. Let's ensure there's no confusion for those students. Those courses are moving to the Ridgetown campus. Those courses are not being cancelled; they're moving to another location. In Alfred, courses will continue, although students will have the option of staying there or moving.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell will come to order. The member from Leeds–Grenville will come to order. The member from Oxford will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, I remembered. New question.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. It has been two years since the Liberal government announced the sell-off of the Ontario Northland, jeopardizing 1,000 families directly and many others indirectly, a decision made without consultation or any research and, we later found out, one that was going to cost the government over \$800 million. Northerners united and forced the government to back-track. Finally, the government has allowed management and the employees to put together a plan and present it—a plan that could revitalize the ONTC. My question is very simple: Will you act on that plan?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I very much appreciate the question. I know what an important issue this is for one in northeastern Ontario. Certainly, we are very, very proud of the fact that we were able to work with people in northeastern Ontario, setting up a ministerial advisory committee that has been meeting for the last year as we look at a different approach to the ONTC, a transformational one that really is as much about restructuring alternative service delivery as others. We are very grateful to have had a report submitted by the management and unions together. That was presented to our ministerial advisory committee a couple of weeks ago. We are looking at it very, very seriously. Again, I'm very grate-

ful for the hard work that has gone into that. This is an extremely important decision. We're conscious of the uncertainty that has been there. I made that clear at our last meeting: that indeed I appreciate all the good work that has been done, and we're looking forward to being able to make some decisions soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: The minister made a good point: It is causing uncertainty. It has caused uncertainty in the north for two years, and now we're worried, at this final juncture, that the government might try to sell off part of the ONTC at this late date just to save face. That would scuttle the plan that was put forward by northerners to revitalize the company. We need a commitment that the ministry, the minister and the Premier are truly going to commit to revitalize the ONTC and not try any fast moves to try to save face at this late juncture.

1130

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Again, I appreciate the question. There certainly are no fast moves that are being made. This has been a really important discussion that we've had.

If I can be clear about one thing, the one thing that's been very, very important to us is that any decisions related to the future of the ONTC really, truly are about finding a way to have a sustainable, long-term operation. That goes for all four divisions of the ONTC.

So we've taken a different approach. The member is aware of that. The ministerial advisory committee members, made up of, certainly, municipal leaders, First Nation, Métis nation, business and industry, have been really, really working hard together. The report that came to us, the combined management and union report, is one that we're looking at very, very seriously.

But I can assure you that the bottom line really is that we're going to make decisions that are based on a long-term, sustainable future for the ONTC and, may I say, a bright future for the ONTC.

CO-OP EDUCATION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Experiential learning is an important component of post-secondary education for many students across the province. The chance to gain valuable on-the-job experience in their field of choice is what many students need to succeed.

Spaces across post-secondary institutions in the province are limited and some co-op students struggle to find placements during their terms. Mr. Speaker, in honour of National Co-operative Education Week, can the minister please explain what the government is doing to support co-operative education in Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for the question and for bringing to the attention of this Legislature the importance of co-op education. It is absolutely a crucial direction that we have to continue to excel in, and our province and our institutions have been among the best in the world at it.

Experiential learning is integral to supporting the skills and knowledge that our students need to succeed in a fiercely competitive global economy. We want to do everything we can to support the 40,000 co-op students at our post-secondary institutions across the province. Through our co-op diploma apprenticeship programs, students get on-the-job apprenticeship training while earning a college degree.

We also support our businesses. To help make it easier for employers to hire co-op students, our government offers up to \$3,000 through the Ontario Co-operative Education Tax Credit.

Mr. Speaker, these are incredibly important programs. There are many more. This is the direction we have to continue to go in. We're good at this, but I think we still need to do more.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: It's good to know we are creating more opportunities for experiential learning by providing support for both students and employers.

Working together, we can make sure that our children have the skills and tools they need to be successful in Ontario's growing workforce, but we must go even further to ensure the success of our students.

As the minister is aware, many co-op programs require students to spend an extra year at their post-secondary institution. This means another year of tuition fees and even more student debt to pay off once they graduate.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what is our government doing to help relieve the extra cost burden for students who choose to pursue co-op education?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm really pleased to be able to say that our government is doing more to help students pursuing co-op education. Ontario recognizes that many of these students face an extra financial burden, and that shouldn't discourage them from having an opportunity to gain valuable work experience while earning a degree.

I know the member who asked the question was on me on this when we brought in the 30% off tuition program. That's why we've extended the 30% off tuition program grant to students in their final year of a five-year co-op program. Eligible students in their fifth year will now be eligible to save up to \$1,730 on tuition per year. Last year, the 30% off tuition grant helped 230,000 students in low- and middle-income families gain access to education and make their education more affordable. It's a program we're really, really proud of, and we're really pleased to have extended it now to the fifth year for co-op students.

FLOODING

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, last spring, people living in Parry Sound-Muskoka and across central Ontario were hit hard by record spring floods brought on by torrential rains. In my riding, the towns of Huntsville and Bracebridge both declared a state of emergency due to the

conditions. Many people around the lakes and across Parry Sound–Muskoka are still recovering from this 100-year flood event.

My question is, with nearly a full year elapsed since the floods last spring, what review has your ministry conducted into the management of the local water system?

Hon. David Oraziatti: I want to thank the member for the question. As we know, the challenges that were faced by residents in this area, given these unprecedented levels of rainfall, were very, very significant and very challenging.

MNR's responsibility, as the member knows, is to provide flood information, warning updates and information so that local individuals can respond in a timely way and do the best job that they can to prepare for and mitigate any negative effects as a result of this type of natural disaster.

We are continuing to improve, to update and to ensure that the local officials in the areas and in the communities that the member is talking about have the information that they need in a timely way. We're committed to continuing to work with the representatives in his communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Minister of Natural Resources: Areas of Parry Sound–Muskoka received record snowfalls this winter—over 400 centimetres. Even without a significant rainfall, managing the watershed this spring will be a challenge.

Minister, I think you know how important local knowledge and years of experience are for ministry staff who manage the watershed and understand the system. Minister, I also know that your ministry is going through what you call the MNR transformation plan that involves staff changes.

My question is, Minister, can you assure me that we are not losing key water control specialists in the Bracebridge or Parry Sound MNR offices in your transformation?

Hon. David Oraziatti: The member has got a very important question here with respect to the safety of residents in his community, with respect to the rainfall, the runoff and the unprecedented levels of snowfall this year.

I understand from our ministry folks that in fact we've already issued some warnings, to be on this in a very proactive way, to ensure that those notifications are issued at the earliest possible point.

With respect to our transformation initiative, we'll certainly commit to the member that those individuals who have the responsibility for indicating this information to local community residents will continue to remain in place and will be working very closely with representatives of his communities.

lost her mother at a Toronto hospital. The great tragedy was not only Dimitra Daskalos's passing but also the ordeal the family was subjected to prior to her death, and the lack of answers following it. Dimitra was treated as a bed blocker, roomed with someone with an antibiotic-resistant disease, apparently in violation of infection control guidelines, and the family was given a bill for \$19,000.

Our system failed Dimitra Daskalos. Why has the Acting Premier refused to investigate how it could all have gone so wrong?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course, I cannot speak to any individual, but I can tell you that people who work in Ontario's health care system are very committed to delivering the highest possible quality care to the patients of this province.

I would be more than happy, if the member opposite wants to share details, to look into this and to make sure that the family has access to the right people to investigate their concerns.

I can tell you that as we move forward with the patient advocate, I am hopeful that all of us will have more comfort in knowing that all of our concerns are dealt with appropriately.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Acting Premier has in fact been given this information in the past and has not pursued an investigation.

Maria and the whole Daskalos family have long asked for Ombudsman oversight of our hospital sector. Ontario's Ombudsman has noted the nightmare that this family was made to endure, in his plea for oversight of hospitals. Yet this government continues to drag its feet on providing the answers the family needs and preventing other tragedies like this from occurring.

On behalf of Maria, her mother and other families who have been failed by our health care system, I ask the Acting Premier yet again to provide the desperately needed independent third-party oversight that only our Ombudsman can provide.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: In fact, our patient ombudsman will have the ability to investigate issues that are raised and brought to the patient ombudsman. I met with André Marin and spoke to him about the importance of a dedicated patient ombudsman, and he was very helpful in giving advice on exactly what that should look like.

As I say, there are currently reviews and oversight and patient advocates in place within hospitals. We're adding another layer to that, Speaker: a patient ombudsman. I think that's the right thing to do as our system becomes more integrated: to have someone with oversight over the entire health system. Our patient ombudsman will do exactly that.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Acting Premier. Three years ago, my constituent Maria Daskalos

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

Mr. Steve Clark: I forgot to mention it in my question. I just want to wish my neighbour the member

for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry a happy 60th birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think we all like to be reminded of how old we are. It's a great point of order.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Leeds–Grenville has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I can see why.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):—you're heckling the Speaker?—of Training, Colleges and Universities concerning the closure of Kemptville and Alfred agricultural colleges. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I ask all members of this House to join me in welcoming my great friend and rising star criminal defence lawyer Elham Jamshidi to the House today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak today about an issue that is important to my constituents and, actually, people across the province.

My office has been receiving many calls in recent months from people who are trying to obtain information about the milestone date for commercial operation for renewable energy projects in their communities. This information used to be easily available online, but it has since been removed. People are trying to find this information, and they are running into difficulty. This is true, as I said, not only in my riding but across the province of Ontario.

Raymond Beaudry of Manitoulin Island, for example, has been trying for months to get information regarding the commercial operating dates regarding wind projects in his community. Mr. Beaudry went as far as filing a freedom-of-information-act request for these details. The Ontario Power Authority responded, first, that "It has been determined that the disclosure of the responsive records may affect the interests of a third party." What about the interests of the individuals and the communities impacted by industrial wind turbines? Don't they count?

Secondly, they went on to say—"they" being the OPA—that they are consulting a third party and will

provide a decision by March 25, 2014. We look forward to that response on that date.

But really, they should not have to file a freedom-of-information-act request in order to get the information they deserve. People still have a right to know whether renewable energy projects in their communities are on schedule, and they have the right to know the status of the contracts that are in place. This information is being hidden from people across the province. This isn't fair.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Today I rise to acknowledge the incredible efforts of the small business owners in my community of London–Fanshawe. For those who don't know, my riding, along with much of southwestern Ontario, has been deeply impacted by the loss of good jobs and the lack of investment necessary to help London thrive.

This government stood by and watched our jobs be lost to the US and our small businesses close one after another. Then they created the southwestern economic development fund, which I understand has not helped one single business in my riding of London–Fanshawe.

Yesterday, I was able to spend the day in my riding with the member from Essex, Taras Natyshak. During our time, we met with local small business owners and heard about the hardships they are facing.

One business that we met with was a local store named Sutherland's Furniture. This family-run store first opened their doors to the public in 1998, by Gus Dupuis, and the tradition continues today, with his daughter Vivianne taking the reins. We spoke about the need for incentives for small businesses to grow and hire new staff, but business owners are cautious to take those steps without some assistance.

That's why we came to speak to Mr. Dupuis and Vivianne about our jobs creation tax credit. This is an actual incentive that will help get Ontario back to work. They were so pleased that someone at Queen's Park is finally paying attention to their needs.

POPE JOHN PAUL II DAY

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yesterday, my private member's bill proclaiming April 2 as Pope John Paul II Day in Ontario passed final reading in the Legislature. I'd like to thank all 107 MPPs who supported that. It was a special day, not only for Catholics in our province but for all Ontarians. Pope John Paul II was a universal figure and spiritual leader whose legacy is marked by his strong commitment to peace, equality, human rights and multi-faith dialogue.

We hope that we will quickly receive royal assent so that we will be able to celebrate Pope John Paul II Day in Ontario this upcoming April 2. It would be extra-special if we could celebrate it this year, as this year marks the 25th anniversary of the fall of communism in central and eastern Europe. Pope John Paul II played an instrumental

role in communism's downfall, most notably in his native Poland, where his pious leadership helped provide Poles with hope, courage and resilience in the struggle against communist oppression.

The passage of this bill yesterday is particularly timely because Blessed Pope John Paul II will be made a saint on April 27. No other pope of this modern era has had a greater spiritual and political impact. He won the hearts of millions, and his lasting message to the world is one of courage and faith. Ontarians will now have April 2 to celebrate and honour the life of this extraordinary man and soon-to-be saint.

CANADIAN WOMEN'S AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to announce to the Legislature that this year the Craigowan Golf and Country Club in the great riding of Oxford will be hosting the Canadian Women's Amateur Championship of golf from July 21 to 24.

The tournament will feature 156 of the best amateur golfers in the country. There will also be international competitors from all over the world, including the US, Mexico, South America, China and parts of Europe. The winner of the tournament will win the coveted Duchess of Connaught golf cup and will also be eligible to compete in the LPGA's 2014 CN Canadian open and the 2014 US amateur championship.

The event will feature over 200 local volunteers from all parts of Oxford. I encourage the people in Oxford to support this tournament by volunteering or simply by attending the event. In addition, the organizers will feature local Oxford food in their menus and receptions. This is a great opportunity to create revenue for Oxford businesses, showcase our great local food, and promote Oxford as the dairy capital of Canada.

Being awarded this tournament is a reflection of the hard work of the Craigowan staff and shows the appeal of the great riding of Oxford. I want to congratulate the Craigowan Golf and Country Club on their hosting this prestigious event. I look forward to a very successful tournament.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to present this statement.

EVENTS IN HAMILTON MOUNTAIN

Miss Monique Taylor: It's always my great pleasure to be able to stand up and to speak about the great time that I have spent back in my riding of Hamilton Mountain last week. I had the opportunity to spend some time with the Hamilton Special Olympic Skating Club for the Special Olympics as they practised with the Disney on Ice skaters. What fantastic athletes these young people are! The dedication that they showed to their sport is outstanding.

I want to commend Clara Hughes as she starts on her 12,000-kilometre cross-country journey to raise aware-

ness of mental health. It was my pleasure, along with many other Hamiltonians, to welcome her to our city at her Big Ride event. Mental health and its devastating impacts need to be brought out into the open so that we can meet the challenges ahead that we're facing.

During a short tour of local businesses with my leader, Andrea Horwath, we heard of concerns, primarily around the increasing costs of hydro.

I also had the absolute pleasure to spend a few hours celebrating Holi at the Hindu Samaj Temple. It was a wonderful time welcoming spring, practising forgiveness and starting anew, with friendship and love for each other. We painted each other with colours to represent a new and brighter future.

I also had the opportunity to visit City Kidz, whose mission is to increase resilience and inspire big dreams for children living in low-income communities.

It was a good week, Speaker, and it reminded me of what a great city I live in and what terrific people I share it with and have the privilege to serve.

KIDNEY HEALTH MONTH

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the month of March as Kidney Health Month in Canada. This year the renal community is celebrating two milestones: the 50th anniversary of the Kidney Foundation of Canada and the 35th anniversary of peritoneal dialysis, a life-saving and sustaining home dialysis treatment which was developed right here in Ontario by Baxter Canada, a global health care company based in my great riding of Mississauga-Brampton South.

In 2009, our government established the Ontario Renal Network to manage the delivery of patient care and set a home dialysis target of 40%, which is benefiting hospitals and clinics and generating savings across Ontario's health care system. Today, approximately 10,000 Ontarians are receiving life-saving dialysis for chronic kidney disease.

1510

I would like to acknowledge the leadership role of Baxter Canada, the Kidney Foundation of Canada and the Ontario Renal Network.

I would also like to encourage all members of this House to raise awareness about the importance of kidney health in their communities.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Last fall, I stood in the House to relay the concerns of the corporation of the city of North Bay and several other communities in my riding whose municipalities also wrote to me regarding the government's Small Rural and Northern Municipal Infrastructure Fund.

Council in North Bay noted that a "per capita formula for sustainable funding" was preferred over the com-

petitive or application process, and passed a resolution asking the Premier to reconsider their approach to the allocation of years 2 and 3 of the fund, in favour of the options supported by the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities.

Now the municipality of Callander has written to me after their application for funding was rejected in December. The letter from the Ministry of Rural Affairs says the project wasn't selected because other applicants had more "challenging economic conditions." Speaker, northern Ontario has double-digit unemployment, and I'm quite certain it does not get more challenging than that.

I said it last fall, and I will say it again—I know in my experience as mayor, as well, whether it's going to AMO or Good Roads, we called it going with the tin cup or with our hat out: The government has set up a system where it picks winners and losers, and we're really hoping for a more equitable position.

PARALYMPIC SLEDGE HOCKEY TEAM

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, I rise today in the House to speak to the valiant effort put forward by Canada's men's sledge hockey at the 2014 Paralympic Winter Games. Overcoming a disability, any kind of disability, is a moment of triumph and speaks to the perseverance of the individual. Paralympians embody that perseverance, they personify it, and we're so proud of them when they don the maple leaf on our behalf.

On Saturday, the Canadian men defeated Norway in a 3-0 victory, returning to the podium for the first time since 2006. The game featured ferocity, emotion and the unrelenting forecheck we've come to expect from great Canadian hockey. It was a pleasure to behold, and it was likely a misery to play against.

As Ontarians, we should be especially proud of the fact that 12 of the 17 members of the men's sledge hockey team are from our fine province. That includes Greg Westlake, who hails from the great town of Oakville. Our town has now produced four Olympic medalists during the Sochi games alone, a fact that I'm very proud of and will likely brag about until the next Winter Games.

Once again, Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the men's sledge hockey team and the rest of Team Canada for the fantastic effort they put forward on our behalf. They made us all proud at the 2014 Paralympic Games in Sochi.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Jim McDonell: On Wednesday, March 13, without any prior notice, except to the Liberal government, the University of Guelph announced the closure of the Alfred and Kemptville agricultural campuses in eastern Ontario. This is a significant loss for the whole region.

Generations of local farmers have studied at Kemptville and Alfred and have helped maintain a tradition of

agricultural innovation and excellence in our area. These campuses helped foster a closely knit farming community stretching from Pembroke to the Quebec border, and provided local education opportunities that are a deciding factor for the many aspiring farmers to enter the industry.

Although according to some sources the Alfred campus may be spared from the cut through the intervention of other Ontario francophone institutions, the opportunity was not afforded to the Kemptville campus. The loss will mean no English agricultural education east of Guelph.

For me, this loss is much more than the loss of a recognized post-secondary institution and the educational opportunities. My five brothers studied at Kemptville, and my family's history, as well as the family history of my neighbours and many aspiring families in the region of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, is tied to the campus.

Kemptville has been an integral part of the fabric of our communities for generations.

If we are to ensure that Ontario leads in agricultural innovation and competes globally, we must preserve local and accessible education in the sector.

It is time for this ministry to step up for agriculture in Ontario and secure a future for both the Kemptville and Alfred agricultural campuses.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here—I normally say that it's signed by a great number of members of my riding, but in fact these are constituents from my neighbouring riding, the riding of Brant. The Speaker will know the riding well. It was presented to me by Roger Chandler.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

Thank you very much for allowing me to present this petition.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly called "Support the Fair Minimum Wage Act," and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government has raised minimum wage by 50% since 2003 and will increase it to \$11, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada, on June 1;

"Whereas both families and businesses in Ontario deserve a fair and predictable approach to setting the minimum wage;

"Whereas indexing minimum wage to CPI is supported by business, labour and anti-poverty groups from across Ontario as the best way to achieve that;

"Whereas indexing ensures minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, providing fairness for workers and their families and predictability for businesses to plan and stay competitive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014."

I agree with this, Speaker, will sign it and send it down with Caroline.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. Todd Smith: I have a number of petitions here from right across the province.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in the province; and

"Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province; and

"Whereas in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

"Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this

fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians."

I agree with this and will send it to the table with Samantha.

RANKED BALLOTING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas, on June 11, 2013 Toronto city council passed a motion requesting a ranked ballot for municipal elections; and

"Whereas Bill 166 will strengthen local democracy within the city of Toronto;

1520

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 166, the Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act, 2014 which was introduced by Mitzie Hunter, MPP (Scarborough-Guildwood) and passed second reading on March 6, 2014."

I will sign this petition and give it to the page.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the University of Guelph's Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario's outstanding post-secondary agricultural schools; and

"Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario, and the future success of the region's agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

"Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph's short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses."

I will be signing this and passing it on to page Jonah.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition entitled "Support the Fair Minimum Wage Act." It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government has raised minimum wage by 50% since 2003 and will increase it to \$11, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada, on June 1;

"Whereas both families and businesses in Ontario deserve a fair and predictable approach to setting the minimum wage;

"Whereas indexing minimum wage to CPI is supported by business, labour and anti-poverty groups from across Ontario as the best way to achieve that;

"Whereas indexing ensures minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, providing fairness for workers and their families and predictability for businesses to plan and stay competitive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014."

Speaker, I support this and will affix my signature to it and give it to Divya.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Auditor General of Ontario defines the global adjustment charge on hydro bills as 'mostly consisting of the difference between the market price and the price paid to generators as set by the board for OPG or under contract with the government or the OPA'; and

"Whereas the Auditor General says the global adjustment has been rising steadily over the last few years and is expected to continue to rise from \$700 million (prior to the 2009 passage of the Green Energy Act) to \$8.1 billion by 2014; and

"Whereas the Liberal government's 2010 fall economic statement stated that hydro bills are expected to rise 46% by 2015, and that new renewable power generation would account for 56% of that increase; and

"Whereas small to mid-sized businesses across Ontario are seeing the global adjustment portion of their monthly hydro bills increase significantly to the point that it is now larger than the actual energy portion of their bills; and

"Whereas many of those businesses are now delaying investment or hiring, or both, and considering either closing or moving outside of the province of Ontario as a result of delivered-to-market industrial energy rates that are now the highest in North America;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to reverse course on its expensive energy policy by cancelling the feed-in tariff (FIT) subsidies and treating Ontario's energy as an economic development tool so that it once again is a competitive advantage for Ontario in retaining and attracting jobs and investment."

I agree with this, sign it and pass it to page Simon.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to be able to read this petition in the Legislature. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the University of Guelph's Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario's outstanding post-secondary agricultural schools; and

"Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario and the future success of the region's agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

"Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph's short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses."

I agree with this and will send it to the table with page Calvin.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Madam Speaker, I have a petition here signed, as you can see by the pile, by hundreds, if not thousands, of constituents. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.' RSO 1990 ...; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature as I agree with the petition.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further petitions? The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to be recognized.

My petition reads as follows:

"Whereas Roseplain Solar Farm Partnership has applied to the Ministry of the Environment for an update in its renewable energy approval application for a solar farm development at 5240 Concession Road 4, RR#1 in the township of Uxbridge;

"Whereas residents adjacent to the proposed project strongly object to a large industrial development on valuable agricultural" class 1 "land and woodlands;

"Whereas possible adverse impacts include reduced property values due to the appearance of the solar development;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has announced cancellation of two proposed nuclear reactors because of surplus generating capacity and furthermore we, as citizens, are concerned that the paying of a large subsidy to a foreign company for many years"—and the feed-in tariff—"will add to the already enormous public debt incurred for building additional generating capacity" which is not needed;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature not to proceed with this large-scale industrial development, in view of the adverse impacts it will have on our community and our province" and our budget.

I'm pleased to sign and present this to Simon, one of the new pages here at Queen's Park.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: I would like to read a petition this afternoon.

"Whereas Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Minister of Energy Bob Chiarelli have publicly stated that there will be no time extensions for large-scale FIT contracts in Ontario, and the Ontario Power Authority CEO, Colin Andersen, has stated the authority is expecting developers to meet contract commitments; and

"Whereas the Premier, minister and the power authority must recognize that damage to our rural area from being under continuing threat by industrial wind turbine developers for three years is serious and unacceptable; and

"Whereas the FIT contracts for the Sumac Ridge, Snowy Ridge, Settlers Landing and Stoneboat projects—all on or near the Oak Ridges moraine and in the former Manvers township in the city of Kawartha Lakes—have already been extended for one year or longer;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, the Minister of Energy the Honourable Bob Chiarelli, and the Ontario Power Authority not issue any further time extensions for FIT contracts and, in particular, for the Sumac Ridge, Snowy Ridge, Settlers Landing and Stoneboat projects—before or after expiry of such contracts. We are advised, and we believe, that the 'force majeure' clause in the FIT contracts is completely inapplicable to these projects; accordingly, we respectfully further request the Legislature to instruct the Minister of Energy to adhere to his assurance that extensions will no longer be granted to wind project proponents who have no contractual right to such an extension and who fail to meet their contractual commitments."

It's signed by many people in my riding. Thank you to David Frank of Cavan and Heather Stauble for bringing them in.

1530

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the McGuinty-Wynne government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I agree with this petition and will be signing it and passing it off to page Callista.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I agree with this petition and I'll sign my name and give it to page Calvin.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time for petitions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 POUR UN SALAIRE MINIMUM ÉQUITABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 3, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 165, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the minimum wage / Projet de loi 165, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le salaire minimum.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The Minister for Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I will be sharing my time with my colleague the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan on this issue.

It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to this very important bill, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act. I want to start by congratulating my colleague the Minister of Labour for his hard work in bringing this forward. It's an important step forward for Ontario's minimum wage earners and a crucial part of our government's plan to help people in their everyday lives.

Bill 165 takes the politics out of deciding the minimum wage by tying future increases to the rate of inflation. It's important to note that this was the recommendation in the consensus report put forward by the Minimum Wage Advisory Panel. The panel, as you know, Madam Speaker, included representatives from business, labour, community and anti-poverty groups. They travelled across the province to get advice and feedback. They heard about the importance of the minimum wage and the need to ensure a fair, predictable and transparent approach to setting it. We listened to the panel's advice, and the Minister of Labour brought forward Bill 165.

I believe that this is a fair and balanced approach that provides predictability to businesses. At the same time, we're ensuring that those earning a minimum wage will not see their wages fall behind the cost of living.

Since 2003, our government has increased the minimum wage seven times, which is equivalent to a 60% increase. We're helping families because, for years, the previous government—currently the opposition—froze the minimum wage. As the cost of living increased, hard-working Ontarians fell further and further behind.

Since 2003, we've stood up for hard-working families and raised the minimum wage from \$6.85 to \$10.25. On June 1, we will be raising it again to \$11. This will help Ontario families, like we did in 2008 when we introduced the province's first Poverty Reduction Strategy. Through it, we created the Ontario children's benefit, which this year will increase to \$1,310 per child. The benefit is cur-

rently helping over one million children in 530,000 middle-class and low-income families. We introduced full-day kindergarten to save parents money on child care costs and give almost 184,000 kids a stronger start in life. We implemented a Student Nutrition Program, which ensures that 700,000 children across the province don't go to school hungry. Our first Poverty Reduction Strategy has made a difference. Over 47,000 children and their families have been lifted out of poverty. An additional 61,000 children were prevented from falling into poverty because they had the supports they needed.

We also saw very encouraging signs from the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics. Ontario continues to have one of the lowest low-income rates in the country. Now, what does that mean? The low-income measure measures the number and percent of children living in households earning less than 50% of the median income. After Alberta and Saskatchewan, as a percentage of our total population, Ontario has the fewest number of people living in poverty. We achieved this by making child poverty the focus of our initial strategy and by making reasonable increases to the minimum wage.

But we know there's more work to be done, which is why our next five-year strategy is under development. On its own, raising the minimum wage does not alleviate poverty. Poverty is a complex issue that requires a holistic approach, one that addresses education, job opportunities, health care and affordable housing. Our government has taken that approach, and we have seen the positive impact it has had in Ontario. By investing in people and partnering with industry to create jobs, we give people the opportunity to reach their full potential.

I can see the importance of these investments when I'm back home and I look across the river. Windsor and Detroit have similar-type economies and are geographically alike, and while I see my community benefiting from our government's support, our neighbours across the river continue to struggle. Our government uploaded social services from municipalities, and Windsor has been able to pay down their debt and freeze taxes for the past six years. At the same time, Detroit has had to declare bankruptcy.

Instead of slashing spending, our government invests in education, health care and infrastructure. We're investing in people to develop their skills, keep them strong and help them find meaningful employment. We've seen graduation rates go up, hospital wait times go down and tens of thousands of jobs created thanks to our investments. Our government has fostered an environment that supports business, an environment that encourages prosperity. We have cut corporate taxes, worked collaboratively with unions and made reasonable increases to minimum wage.

Michigan's tax rate is higher than Ontario's, and they're now a right-to-work-for-less state. Their minimum wage is \$7.40 while our current rate is \$10.25. So the question is, does having a lower minimum wage and becoming a right-to-work jurisdiction create more jobs? Clearly, the answer is no. Windsor's unemployment rate

is 7%. Detroit's unemployment rate is 14%. Ontario's unemployment rate is lower than Michigan's. It's quite clear: Tea Party-style policies just don't work. That's what the party opposite advocates for: attacking unions and keeping wages low. That doesn't create more jobs. Their policies would drive away jobs, and that's exactly what they did a couple of weeks ago with Chrysler.

We don't live in an economics textbook or in a theory world; we live in the real world, and in the real world, governments have a responsibility to partner with industry to create jobs. If Ontario doesn't step forward, some other jurisdiction will. We can't pretend that other jurisdictions won't offer grants and tax breaks to steal companies out of Ontario.

1540

The recklessness of the party opposite and their leader is astounding. They pat themselves on the back when they drive away business. While we continue to build a strong economy for today and tomorrow, they would have Ontario move backwards in time. But at least they've laid out their positions. They have reached deep into the Tea Party playbook and said to the people of Ontario, "This is what we stand for."

The NDP's silence, on the other hand, is deafening, and that's dangerous for the future of our province. We reached our position on the minimum wage by taking an evidence-based approach. We took the rate of inflation since we last raised the minimum wage, and raised the rate to \$11. What was the NDP position? Well, at first they didn't have one. It was disappointing that neither of the opposition parties made a submission to the panel, nor did they speak up on the issue in this chamber. When the NDP finally took a position on the minimum wage, after our leadership, it was an obvious attempt to score political points.

We're taking the politics out of minimum wage for that very reason. Our position was developed in consultation with business, labour, anti-poverty advocates and youth. We're taking an evidence-based approach grounded in sound policy because, unlike the NDP, we're not thinking about the sound bites of today; we're thinking about the province we want to see tomorrow. In that province, minimum wage will keep up with the cost of living, and businesses will have a fair and predictable way of determining future wages.

I'd like to thank the advisory panel for all their hard work and bringing forward their recommendations. I'd like to give special thanks to Adam Vasey, the director of Pathway to Potential in Windsor, for his work on the panel and for all his efforts at reducing poverty in Windsor.

Tying the minimum wage to inflation is an important step that ensures workers are protected and businesses have predictability. I urge all members of this House to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you very much, and thank you to the Minister of Children and Youth Services

for sharing her time. I'll add my thanks, as well, to the Minister of Labour for all of his work in bringing this piece of legislation to the floor of the House.

The previous speaker has spoken well in terms of what exactly Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, does: increasing the minimum wage to \$11 per hour as of June 1—should the legislation pass, of course—once again giving Ontario the highest minimum wage in the country. This 75-cent increase accounts for inflation since the last increase, in March 2010, and will bring our increases since being elected in 2003 to somewhere in the order of magnitude of about 60%.

I would, if I can, like to acknowledge, however, that there are still concerns—as is always the case, no matter what the policy or legislation—expressed from some sectors. I've heard from probably a couple of small businesses in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan who have expressed some concern, even with what I consider to be a pretty fair and balanced approach to the minimum wage issue. I've talked to them about this, and I would say it here in the Legislature today and just restate for the record some of the measures that we have put in place when it comes to supporting business generally, and small businesses particularly, in the province of Ontario over the last number of years.

Capital tax: We eliminated capital tax quite a number of years ago. As I understand it, basically it was seen by businesses to be a tax on investment. It really didn't matter if the businesses were showing a profit or not. If they had invested in their particular business, this capital tax would in fact impose a financial penalty on them, and you could say it was actually a disincentive to investment. We eliminated that. I remind my small business friends of that.

We have reduced the small business tax rate once—perhaps twice—I think from 5.5% down to 4.5%. I'm a little fuzzy on the numbers, but certainly there has been about a 20%, at least, reduction in the small business tax rate.

We reduced down to the provincial average the business education tax rate. That goes back to the days when the local school boards still had tax authority. When that was flipped back here and the provincial government in the late 1990s took it over, we had—in fact, the current leader of the Conservatives today was the Minister of Northern Development and Mines at the time, and he left northern Ontario's business education tax rates at the highest level in the entire province.

We received input from the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce, and we have brought those business education tax rates down to the provincial average, keeping about \$20 million to \$25 million in the pockets of businesses in northern Ontario—a very significant move.

People are familiar with the corporate income tax rates. I hope they're aware as well of the work on the single sales tax, perhaps the single biggest thing that could have been done for businesses and that perhaps has something to do with the fact that Ontario has recouped

about 140% of the jobs lost through the recession in 2008.

I would remind people as well, Speaker, that we reduced the personal income tax rate. I don't think a lot of people remember that we did that some years ago: 1% on the first \$37,000 of income. If you're a two-income family earning \$20,000 to \$25,000 per year each—a low-income family—that 1% is \$400 to \$500. If you're at the maximum of \$37,000, that 1% is \$370 times two, or \$740. It's a significant piece.

As well, I would mention that our tax reforms, since we started undertaking these policy pieces some years ago, have removed at least 90,000 off the tax rolls completely. They no longer pay tax at all.

In terms of all of these tax initiatives, I would like to think they have played some role, as I said, in the number of jobs that we've recouped since the recession in 2008. In fact, I can tell you that in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, we have had, for the last four or five years, one of the best, if not the best, unemployment rates, pretty consistently, in the province of Ontario. I think right now it's hovering just over 5%, maybe 5.7%. I forget the number exactly.

For my small business folks, and businesses generally, who have concerns about the minimum wage and what it may do, I think it's important to remind them about some of those initiatives.

As the previous speaker has outlined as well—and I'll add a few points to it—the minimum wage is not the only policy piece that we've undertaken over the years when it comes to anti-poverty measures. The previous speaker talked about full-day kindergarten and also the Ontario Child Benefit, that is now benefiting about one million children in the province of Ontario and will be increased soon to \$1,310 per child—significantly increased, I think, about \$100 more from about \$1,210.

Raises to ODSP and OW, for those on social assistance who are working, increase the threshold up to \$200 on money that they can keep before anything is clawed back, if they're on social assistance. I think it's at about 50%. So we've increased that to \$200. I should have done the math—I think it was at \$100 and we're moving it to \$200—to see exactly what that might mean for somebody who's on social assistance. In terms of a percentage increase, it's a very significant amount.

We don't talk about that a lot, but in terms of an anti-poverty initiative, I think it's important that we remind people of that, and that when we're talking anti-poverty, we don't just focus on the minimum wage.

As I've mentioned already, I've talked about the PIT rate for people, and the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, 10% off your energy bill. For northerners, there's the northern Ontario electricity tax credit. If you're single, you're eligible for up to a maximum of \$130 per year. If you're a low-income family, you're eligible for up to \$200 per year. They're significant pieces.

As well, one that I wanted to mention and highlight, and that we're all quite proud of, is the Student Nutrition Program, which I think is significant as well, where over

700,000 kids in Ontario are now benefiting from this particular piece.

All of those, Speaker—and I'm sure I haven't captured them all—are parts of an anti-poverty program and are having a significant impact. So when we talk about the \$11 per hour, I hope people are not framing this as the only thing that has occurred when it comes to helping those who are on a lower income level.

I wanted to talk briefly—I'm running out of time. Quickly, there was a \$14-an-hour campaign that was conducted across the province for some time. I thank those people and those organizations for their work. I do think that a 40% increase, which is close to what was being asked, would have been seen and viewed by most people, I think, if truth be known, as having caused significant concerns. I think it's why you could say that there was no political party of the three represented here—not the Conservatives, not the NDP and not the Liberals—that aligned themselves with that particular campaign and that would have agreed to go to \$14 an hour. Certainly, businesses would have had serious concerns with that.

1550

I am very pleased with the measured approach that we've taken, going from \$10.25 to \$11 and indexing it to CPI. I think that is prudent. I think it's progressive. It allows for predictability.

I would also say, as the previous speaker outlined, that we stand in stark contrast on this policy to that of the other two parties. We know when they were in government, the official opposition I think froze it. I don't think it moved even once in the eight or nine years that they were in power, from 1995 to 2003. I don't think they moved it once—I think it was frozen—and there were significant reductions in other social assistance programs. I forget what the rates were slashed by for those who were on social assistance. And the third party, the NDP, did not come out publicly with a position on the minimum wage until after we had staked our dollar value at being \$11.

As I said in the Legislature some time ago, Speaker, when we said \$11, they'd say \$12; if we had said \$12, they would have said \$13. I think people understand that, and I think it probably would have led to some interesting conversations within their caucus, given the fact that they wouldn't take a position on this.

I will say this in defence of the minimum wage as well: I think that people who are making what will soon be, should this legislation pass, the \$11 per hour—what we do know about people who earn lower incomes is that most of their money is spent. People who are making \$11 an hour are not socking money away into RSPs; what they're earning usually goes back into the economy. On that very fact alone, for many reasons that I've talked about previously but this one also, the disposable income aspect of this, I would say back to the small business owners perhaps, stands as good support for this particular policy position. They're not saving this money. If you're making \$11 an hour, most of what you earn is going back

into the economy in one way, shape or form. I think it's another reason to support this particular policy.

I only have a minute left. The other thing I would say as well is, in terms of making a distinction between smaller businesses—who we all have sensitivity to, and their ability to make money, earn a living and all the risk that they take, and I have great respect for small business, having grown up in one myself—and some of these larger corporations out there, without naming any, who pay their staff a minimum wage and oftentimes don't have a benefit package: I'd love to see a public pressure campaign, not just government. If we put one minimum wage on everybody that was too high, it could really hurt some folks. We do know there are outfits out there that make a whole lot of money, that could afford to pay a higher minimum wage than the \$11, and I'd love to see some sort of public pressure campaign honestly being applied. Without having to mention any of these large corporations by name, many who are watching will know a couple of the big ones off the top that I'm talking about, who really could likely afford to pay their folks a higher minimum wage than is currently being contemplated in the Legislature.

Speaker, my time is up, and I thank you for the 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's an honour to get up and respond to the comments made by the party opposite. I noticed in a couple of comments they were talking about Michigan, and they brought up the unemployment rate. But, Michigan, when this government took over, used to be not in first place in the auto industry, and, of course, through their policies, now they're in first place in auto manufacturing. Ontario used to have that role; of course, now, we're number 3, behind Mexico. So we can see their policies are really working. It's great for the state of Michigan, improving the other one-industry state, something that we didn't used to be, but, of course, we're offloading. They have an ambassador down in Washington, I guess, organizing, as our companies leave and go down there to work.

They talk about investments. It's interesting, I heard this week about the investment in two long-standing institutions: Kemptville campus is getting ready to celebrate 100 years, and with no notice, rumours the day before, that they're closing, not accepting first-year students. I guess it's great that they spent some time and supposedly have worked on something in the Alfred campus. We haven't seen that. We don't know if they're keeping their institutions. We do know that the quota system that belonged to both those institutions is going back to Guelph, one of the few incomes they had. I hear them talk about the costs, that these institutions were actually costing money. Well, I guess that is the nature of educational institutions, whether it be primary, secondary or university or college in this country, that they do cost money. They're considered an investment.

After hearing the Premier's speech in St. Albert last week talking about investment in agriculture and trying

to grow the industry, two days later we're shocked to hear what she meant. She didn't mean investing; she means taking money out of the industry. We're looking forward to see if we can do something with that, with her help.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: We're talking about Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, today. The minister for, I think it's community and social safety services—

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Children and youth services.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Children and youth services, sorry. She had mentioned that there were panel consultations, going around the province. I remember when we got that email letting us know that the government was forming a panel to travel around the province to get deputations for the minimum wage. What I did is I sent them out to the community. I sent them out to groups that could actually participate in that consultation. I don't know where the idea comes from that the NDP had to present at the consultation. We would have people that are constituents, groups and organizations that should be participating in those consultations.

Political parties—we're going to, of course, come out with our proposal once we have done our own research. That's what we did. We consulted with stakeholders and constituents and listened to the groups that reached out to us, as well as we reached out to them, and then we came up with our policies.

It's very interesting how the Liberal government was much anticipating what the NDP's proposal was going to be for minimum wage. I'm glad that we finally came out with it and satisfied the anticipation of the Liberal government, but we took our time and we made sure that our proposal was a practical one. I'll discuss that later in another two-minute hit.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? The member for—

Mr. Paul Miller: Brampton West.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Brampton West. Thank you.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to speak on Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act. Madam Speaker, to begin, I can tell you that in Brampton West, a lot of people will benefit as a result of an increase in the minimum wage as a result of our balanced approach to helping put more money into people's pockets—for example, a reduction. There are a lot of students in Brampton West. We have the student fee tax credit, the child tax benefit, which will help a lot of single parents. As well, we're helping Ontarians with a reduction in auto insurance with our target of 15%, and we've already reached a reduction in auto insurance by 5%.

With this act, we are increasing the minimum wage on June 1 to \$11 an hour provincially, which will be the highest minimum wage paid in Canada. This is on top of the many increases that we've had since 2003. We've increased the minimum wage seven times—60%.

We have taken a very fair and balanced and predictable approach to increasing the minimum wage in the future. We have set it to inflation so that our businesses know, and they can predict, what their costs for the future will be.

The bottom line: This is about fairness. It's about putting more money into people's pockets, and it's about giving business predictability to help grow our economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: It's very interesting that the member from Brampton West is saying that this is going to put more money into people's pockets. I don't quite understand how that's possible when you're raising minimum wages and yet hydro rates are doubling and Enbridge is asking for a 40% increase.

I'm concerned at the fiscal management. My mother was an accountant and I used to help her. I remember being a child and having her explain to me with the big ledger books when it would end up that people would be in the red. I couldn't understand how businesses could be operating in the red. It's a sad truth that not only is our government operating in the red, but we have households in the province, many households, where we're promising them some fiscal management and some relief and instead they are seeing hydro rates go up, they are now seeing natural gas costs go up, and they are seeing all kinds of new taxes, hidden taxes. I'm hearing from constituents who can't afford to pay the parking at hospitals, and they're suffering because of that.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: So what's your solution?

1600

Mrs. Gila Martow: Exactly. We need to offer solutions, and the solution isn't to focus on creating minimum wage jobs in this province. The solution is to lower the cost of living, lower the cost of doing business, and create jobs that will support life, support students, and create the opportunities for people in the eastern ridings to be able to study at colleges that focus on learning a trade such as agriculture and farming. That's what we need in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time for responses has ended. The minister has two minutes to respond.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'd like to thank the members from—hopefully I got these right—Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, London-Fanshawe, Brampton West and Thornhill for your comments with respect to my and my colleague's comments with respect to the Fair Minimum Wage Act.

It's interesting when I hear the comments talking about what we need to do and some of the solutions. If I look back in terms of what this government has done in terms of providing access to education and increasing graduation rates, establishing an education system that is looked upon around the world, and when we look at this jurisdiction still being a popular jurisdiction for investments and, in fact, higher rates of foreign investments coming into Ontario, I think Ontario is a pretty good

place. I think we should all be standing up for Ontario and talking about our strengths, absolutely.

I hear the NDP talking about consultation and whether they were or they weren't part of the discussion through that period of time. The fact remains that through the consultation they didn't say anything, whether at a panel or in a question here. After we announced what our response was to the panel, I think it took about a couple of weeks before they came forward and said, "Yeah, well, here's our plan." I guess they must have heard a little bit of the same that we did, that they went up to \$11, but I'm sure they were hearing from their constituents that in fact they wanted \$14. Well, they didn't go to \$14. I'm sure they heard from business that they need predictability, but they said, "Well, 50 cents will bring it to \$12," again making it a political decision.

We're making this a fair, transparent, predictable system, which is what business has asked us to do. At the same time, we're ensuring that minimum wage will maintain its parity with CPI, with the cost of living, and ensure that that stays even.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'm pleased to speak today on the government's plans to raise the minimum wage and tie it to inflation.

Let us begin by saying that reducing poverty in Ontario is a noble goal that's shared by all parties in this Legislature. Our duty as elected representatives is to ensure Ontarians enjoy an increasing standard of living and greater opportunities to achieve prosperity.

The many aspects of good government boil down to keeping order and ensuring law-abiding citizens can succeed in the field that they choose. It is no secret that the present government has failed to carry out their duties to the latter. Before we talk about poverty reduction and minimum wage, let us see how the party opposite got us into the situation we have today.

Over the past 10 years, they have presided over an artificial inflation of utility rates, a ballooning provincial debt, and an exodus of good-paying jobs from Ontario. All these failures contribute to keeping Ontarians in poverty and throwing more of our residents into it. In fact, they have doubled the number of people, or the percentage, on minimum wage. The minimum wage is not the be-all and end-all solution. I will examine each of these separately, beginning with energy.

One of the hallmarks of adulthood and achieved independence is the payment of one's own bills. Whether it's an 18-, 58- or 88-year-old, the utility bills are a significant component of our monthly cash flow and influence many of our decisions. When the bills increase, our disposable income drops, sometimes significantly, leaving us with fewer opportunities to provide for ourselves and keep the local economy going.

The natural variability of energy prices can be ascribed to market dynamics and is an economic factor that we have to live with. For instance, the recent spike in propane costs is attributable to increased demand and the

unusually high heating needs in December and January. However, in Ontario, we have witnessed nothing short of a deliberate inflation of the cost of energy that has already eaten away any benefit Ontarians may derive from any increase in the minimum wage.

As per the Auditor General's 2011 annual report, there was no economic study done by this government prior to committing to unaffordable energy subsidies, which we are all paying for through the global adjustment. This line item can be as large as half of the average family's utility bill.

My seatmate from Cambridge had a bill from a small business in his riding. The global adjustment was more than \$37,000, plus HST—over \$42,000—more than 62% of the overall bill of \$67,000. That's just unbelievable.

This is how you create small business: Take a medium or big business and hit it with taxes, expenses and regulations until it is small.

Although the government professes to care about the plight of the poorest Ontarians, many residents in my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry come to my constituency office with their utility bills in hand, at their wits' end, desperate for help. They aren't complaining about the minimum wage or anybody's carbon footprint. They're facing the choice between heating and food, and they can see no reason for such continued energy rate increases that are threatening to make them homeless.

If poor Ontarians are the intended beneficiaries of this bill, the government is in for a disappointment. The party opposite could deliver much more significant financial relief to poor families by abolishing their artificially high energy rates, which are nothing less than a stealthy, regressive tax on the poorest.

The second factor eroding Ontarians' standard of living is the growing public debt. The entire cabinet must have flunked Economics 101. Had they paid attention in class, they would have learned that money does not grow on trees. Government debt is a slow-acting economic poison that affects the poorest most. Every dollar borrowed today will have to be removed from the economy tomorrow or sometime in the future, which, unless the size and costs of governments are reduced, can only be done through taxes, user fees or reduced public services. All three Liberal methods of addressing public debt will nullify any benefit poor Ontarians may derive from a 75-cent increase in the minimum wage.

Socio-economic status is a reasonable predictor of an individual's health and need for public services. It is no secret that Ontarians experiencing the most financial pressures are more likely to be in need of extra health care and extra access to social services such as housing and emergency financial assistance. Unaffordable levels of public debt affect our ability to provide these services, as our creditors impose tougher interest conditions on further borrowing. Increased taxation is not the answer, as mobile businesses and middle classes are not bound to Ontario and can, in the end, leave the province if they so choose, eroding our tax base even further.

Many poor Ontarians are unable to move due to a lack of skills, experience or due to other factors such as the

need to care for dependent children. Just last year, we were presented with plans by this government to raise fees for a range of government services, including a \$5 charge for the use of ServiceOntario. These fees are, again, regressive, because their impact on a poor household is disproportionately larger than on a household earning an average income.

This rings especially true in Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, a riding with a total area of 2,700 square kilometres, where the city of Cornwall, the only entity that receives a pittance of gas tax money for transit, covers less than one sixtieth, or 2%. Many rural residents need to commute to the city, including its business park, with a private vehicle. Any job seeker accepting a minimum wage job in the city will end up earning \$6 more per day, but they will see an extra 35 cents taken away due to the planned increased gas tax on an average 20-kilometre commute in a fairly efficient vehicle. Over the course of one year, combined with increased hydro and user fees, the benefits of a higher minimum wage will vanish altogether.

I will give another example of how these benefits of a higher minimum wage will be eroded. Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry is the host of a bilingual call centre. Whether they pay their employees the minimum wage or a proportion above it, any benefit derived from this bill's provisions will be eroded by the upcoming mandatory trade registration for call centre workers. Between hydro, gas taxes, trade taxes and user fees, Ontarians will no longer be better off than they were before the minimum wage was increased.

1610

I will now address the last factor I mentioned at the beginning of this speech: the gradual disappearance of well-paying jobs in the province under this government's watch. Ontario is blessed with abundant natural resources, advanced energy-generating technologies, a highly educated workforce and continued attractiveness for skilled immigrants. Even in 2010, in the depths of the recession, according to an internal study by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ontario was the intended destination for almost two thirds of skilled workers admitted to Canada. When skilled workers from across the world believe Ontario to be the land of opportunity, holding the same belief and implementing strategies to make this vision into reality should be a no-brainer for this government. What we have witnessed instead is a gradual erosion of the competitive advantages Ontario once had.

The only way to raise overall wages is through job creation, not raising the minimum. Over the past decade, despite all professed good intentions and policies, the present government has caused the cost and difficulty of doing business in Ontario to increase. These can be direct costs, such as increased WSIB premiums, increased energy costs and taxation, or indirect costs, such as more paperwork, unreliable energy supplies and a shortage of skilled tradespeople.

I recently received several delegations from northern Ontario municipalities, who brought to my attention the

particular challenges faced by enterprises in their area: The power supply is prone to blackouts due to many stations operating either significantly below or at capacity due to regulation, causing imbalances in the grid. Every energy cut can cause several hundred thousand dollars' worth of damage and delays. Municipal representatives raised the concern that northern Ontario plants of some major manufacturers were the least economically viable, putting local jobs at risk. They are not minimum wage jobs, but they are at risk of vanishing.

The minimum wage does not raise people out of poverty. Here are some factors that do: good jobs, good health care, affordable energy, private sector job creation, good mobility, low taxation and low payroll deductions. This government has implemented a misguided approach to jobs, whether at the minimum wage or above, by expanding the public payroll. With some exceptions, government jobs remove wealth from the economy by burning value. Money that can be spent, saved or invested by consumers is instead used to pay pen-pushers.

Moreover, this Liberal government is about to remove even more disposable income from the pockets of Ontarians through its plans for a mandatory pension plan. Whether you make the minimum wage or fall into any other bracket, it's what you receive that actually counts. Whatever increases in the minimum wage are implemented, the planned pension program is bound to take away benefits. While Ontarians will not see the benefits of the increase until they are 65, their well-being beyond that point is always in doubt. We hear of unfunded liabilities in both provincial programs, such as the WSIB, and the federal programs, such as CPP and EI. I have, however, yet to hear of an unfunded liability in an RRSP or a tax-free savings account, mostly because these funds aren't managed by the government.

So what is the purpose of this bill before us? It is designed to help Ontarians who are struggling to pay the bills. It won't. It is designed to increase the disposable income available to Ontarians at the bottom of the wage scale, and it won't. It is designed to address poverty, and it certainly won't. The current government has seen a doubling of the workforce on minimum wage. They may see it as an achievement, increasing the number of provincial Liberal voters who can be attracted by minimum wage policies. We see it as a great pool of talent and skill being underutilized.

As trustees of public policy, we should be focused on strategies that would make the minimum wage a distant memory for all Ontarians. Rather than see the number of minimum wage earners double, the Ontario PC caucus wants to see Ontario on a path that would see all Ontarians employed well above the minimum wage levels. Skilled, high-value-added jobs produce wealth, and the more value that is added, the greater the benefit to the whole province. What we need in Ontario is a comprehensive strategy to reduce the initial costs of production and foster job creation and innovation. Minimum wage policies are not a factor that helps achieve these objectives.

Just a few weeks ago, the current government voted against a much better plan for lifting Ontarians out of poverty and out of minimum wage jobs: the Million Jobs Act. On this side of the House, we realize that the future of Ontario lies in innovation and skilled jobs, rather than more agencies and government-sponsored talking shops.

Tinkering with the minimum wage is dangerous because of the numerous unintended consequences that such policies may have. It's important to highlight these, because, if there is something that we can be certain of, it's that this government hasn't done their homework. Maybe that's the reason that they failed Economics 101, and numerous poor Ontarians in the process.

There's hardly anyone remaining on the government front bench to act as a credible advocate for caution and well-thought-out economic policies. If they express their reservations in cabinet, they are clearly not listened to.

The minimum wage's influence is twofold. It obviously increases the overall cost of labour, which can be either passed on to the consumer through higher prices or amortized by reducing hours or the workforce. Higher consumer prices will eat into the benefits of a higher minimum wage and further erode the disposable income and saving potential of workers who are earning above the minimum wage level.

The more treacherous influence of the minimum wage is seen at the margin. This includes employers' choices such as whether to stay in business or not, or whether to train or not. Let's face it: Many workers require training on their new jobs. It can be as basic as adapting to new routines, co-workers and the environment, or as complex as learning to operate certain machinery or gaining some kind of safety certification. While these processes are ongoing, the worker is for all intents and purposes almost a dead weight, which the employer hopes to transform into a productive employee. Increasing the minimum wage skews the equation against the untrained worker.

The recession released many experienced workers into the job market, and they are naturally the first in line to be rehired once the business begins recruiting, as they require less training and adaptation time than someone who has either been unemployed for a long time or whose skill set does not match the employer's profile perfectly.

Incidentally, a higher minimum wage may cause increased demand for government-run training programs, which are inherently more expensive than employer-driven training. They require government bureaucrats to administer the money, and they require government bureaucrats to deliver the money and service. Ultimately, the government-trained job-seeker will see a fraction of the investment in his or her training, and certainly a smaller portion than a privately trained employee will benefit from.

A recent report in the United States from the Congressional Budget Office, an impartial watchdog, predicted that an across-the-board increase of the minimum wage in the country could result in as many as 500,000 jobs lost. Granted, the minimum wage jump that was

being considered was significant; translated into our situation, it would mean either \$13.10 in dollar-for-dollar terms or \$14.29 in proportional increases, yet we cannot deny that minimum wage is a factor for many employers who rely on minimum wage workers.

Speaker, the lack of ambition—rather than creating better jobs, they focus on the bottom of the scale. Instead of fostering success and growth, they punish it. Instead of focusing on keeping taxpayers' money in taxpayers' pockets, where it belongs, they plot ways to reduce Ontarians' disposable incomes.

Prosperity and financial security are about disposable income, not the minimum wage. If energy was affordable and municipalities received their fair share of the gas tax so they wouldn't have to increase property taxes to fund road maintenance, even Ontarians on today's minimum wage would be better off.

This government must stop taking money that isn't theirs and, when they do take money, focus on delivering the services we pay for rather than cushy jobs and perks for their support base. This bill does not create jobs, nor does it bring relief. It is an excuse to tout Liberal anti-employer credentials with a segment of the population that needs much better and more focused action. This bill may not kill jobs today, but it distracts from the actions that we take for the sake of a better tomorrow.

1620

The Ontario PC caucus has a better plan to lift Ontarians out of minimum wage jobs and out of poverty. While the government may relish the economic decline as it makes Ontarians more vulnerable to their rhetoric, we believe that Ontario can succeed, if only we gave the workforce a chance.

Incidentally, statistics show that a very large portion of minimum wage earners are students. If the aim of this bill was to lift Ontarians out of poverty, it clearly misses the target. It may be a solution for the government's failure to deliver true relief to the least-advantaged students facing the highest in-province tuition in Canada—the students that most needed the 30% discount ending up being ineligible for it. The minimum wage may deliver some relief, but is clearly not the amount to cover the 30% of the educational costs.

The bluntness of minimum wage legislation as a poverty reduction tool has been shown in many economic studies. The minimum wage is a cop-out for the government that is out of money for programs that can truly make a difference and aimed specifically at the poorest. Meanwhile, they can always find \$1.1 billion to save their own seats. Altering the minimum wage is a way for the government to make employers pay for rhetoric rather than bureaucrats paying for government mistakes, and we can do better.

Speaker, I have a study here that talks about the faith that small business has in this government. We see, in Ontario, less than 15% of employers think that—"How confident are you that your provincial government has a vision that supports small business?" We clearly see that there's work ahead. We need to develop an atmosphere

that will foster the old Ontario way of wanting to do better, investing in the future, expecting returns that they can count on based on the prosperity of this province. But we see a cost of doing business that again is being driven up. We brag about having the highest minimum wage in the country—I guess you could translate that probably into "on the continent." I guess they're bragging about the highest energy rates on the continent and the highest payroll taxes.

This government has wasted an enormous amount of money. If you look at the increase in revenue that they have achieved over the previous government back in 2003, if you add up the differences in the revenues, the offloading of funds, over half a trillion dollars wasted that they could have turned around and bought infrastructure in this province that we're desperately in need of. These are lost opportunities. They are lost forever as now we have to turn around and pay this debt off. I think that it's clear that this government has failed. We have a game-changer here, the minimum wage. But really, we have to start looking at what this province really needs to succeed again, and we're looking at our plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to talk on the minimum wage, and on exactly some of the comments that were made earlier.

It was very surprising to me when they talked about the strong economy in Ontario today.

They said that the NDP was silent on the minimum wage. I can tell you that I was here less than a week and I had asked questions on the minimum wage.

They also talked about it being political, the minimum wage, from the NDP. Well, I can tell you, as a candidate in Niagara Falls, during the middle of my election, they made the announcement on the \$11 minimum wage. I don't think there's anything more political than making an announcement as important as the minimum wage in the middle of a by-election. It was extremely surprising to me—the candidates should have been going around the riding talking about jobs, where, in Niagara, I continue to say, we have the highest unemployment in the province of Ontario, where the poverty rate is one of the highest in Ontario, where you have one in six children in the Niagara region living in poverty. That's what we should have been talking about in the election.

When you take a look at the schools in Niagara, almost every school, thanks to the teachers and the principals, has breakfast clubs because the parents cannot afford to pay their rent, pay their high electricity rates and feed their children. It's surprising to me. When I was going around talking about Fort Erie and talking about the importance of the government committing to a long-term future for the Fort Erie Race Track, we couldn't get that commitment during the election. We need that to be done so we can help—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's my pleasure to respond to the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

I would first, however, like to address the comments from the member from Niagara. I think I've already welcomed him. The truth of the matter is, you're late to the dance, but you're at the dance and that's great, and I hope you'll be able to support this bill.

I think that raising the minimum wage is the right and fair thing to do for families. It's balanced. It's supported by small business. Our measures to increase it are consistent in terms of yearly review with the consumer price index, an annual increase, depending on what that is.

I would, however, like to address right now—well, also to establish the fact that the member opposite's party has voted against every minimum wage increase and froze it for eight years while they were in government. More importantly, you talk about getting jobs for young people, but you voted against all the investments we made in post-secondary education, which are the determinants of people getting good jobs: \$6 billion into our colleges and universities, more access, 30% off tuition. Those are the things that are going to help people get good jobs.

What I'm really, really surprised at from the member opposite are his comments on CPP. There's a reason we come together as a government, and that's to do things together, to look out for each other, and CPP is a great example of that. It is almost unconscionable that the federal government refuses to address that issue. Now, I understand that the federal Minister of Finance has resigned today. Yes, he has, so maybe there's some hope for CPP.

I appreciate the member's comments, but I want to underline that his comments on the CPP really are out of step with—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings-Quinte West.

Mr. Todd Smith: Well, Quinte West is close by, that's for sure—Prince Edward-Hastings.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to bring some comments to the 20 minutes that the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry had when talking about minimum wage here in the province. I thought he made an excellent point when he said that really there's nothing for this government to brag about when they're talking about having the highest minimum wage in the country.

We have the highest energy rates in the country. He was right about that. We have the highest energy rates in North America now, and 10 years ago, we had the lowest. We have the highest payroll taxes in Canada now. That's not something that we should be bragging about. And we have the largest red-tape burden of any jurisdiction in North America. These are all things that are making it very, very difficult for our businesses in this province right now to hang on. Many of them tell me that they're hanging on by their fingernails because of the costs of doing business in this province. So the government comes through, in the middle of the by-election in Niagara Falls and Thornhill, which—the member from Niagara Falls is absolutely right: The government

shouldn't be making major policy announcements during by-election campaigns, or even general election campaigns, for that matter. You'll recall what they did in the general election in 2011: They announced the cancellation of the gas plants in the middle of the election, and it ended up costing us \$1.4 billion. What has that done to increase the highest energy rates in North America? It has put them even higher, which makes it even more difficult for Ontario businesses to survive. These types of announcements shouldn't come during an election.

I would like to point out, though, that during the first week that the member from Niagara Falls was here, he voted to support the Liberals in a confidence motion after he had campaigned for five weeks against this Liberal government, which he called corrupt during that time.

I agree with the comments that were made by the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. We need to look further into this.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I find this exchange very interesting, and I'll tell you why, Speaker. This is good. The member from Ottawa South stands up and he points over here. He meant the Conservatives didn't raise it in eight years, and he also meant that the CPP was their doing, not ours. Thank you for clarifying that.

The member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan: He's saying how wonderful the Liberals are in the last seven or eight years, raising the thing up. Well, I've got news for you, folks. For 15 years before that, the NDP were asking for raises. Some of you were not even around. So it makes me laugh when they take credit.

And they say, "Well, why didn't the NDP come out flying on the raises?" Well, I'll tell you: because the Liberals sat back and wanted to see what we were going to do. Like everything else they do, they take our ideas. They have no research. They have no substance. They have no direction. They wait for the other party to come up with the idea, and then they run with it, and then they announce it as their idea. They are unbelievable. I can't believe they do these things. And I have to sit there and listen to this.

Then they pick on the member from Niagara Falls, who just got here. The poor guy is being pounded already, and he's not in the wrong. He was absolutely right in what he said in his campaign. Todd took a run at him, but that's okay.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm sorry. But I'm telling you right now, Speaker, it makes me laugh to sit in this House and look at these people riding that horse when they never even got on it in the first place. When they finally do get on the horse, it was their idea, and they go right down Main Street with it, just like on this thing, just like on—everything they do is off our ideas and our research. You're welcome.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: No. Two-minute response.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Okay. Back to the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker—and I guess quite amusing. I hear people around here on a high horse talking about horses. But anyway, it's interesting to hear some of the comments directed back and forth, and I guess we'd have to agree with some of the comments about the government here. Every day, people come up to me, and the word is that Ontario's in a mess. I think that's a good way of putting it: It's in a mess. Anybody who runs a business is fed up. If they can't leave, they're upset, because they can't take their business with them. That's all that's left here: the people that can't take their business away.

You talked about, Ottawa South, the minimum wage. They didn't even follow their own panel. The panel never talked about increasing minimum wage the way it did. It talked about inflation rates. But you took an immediate jump to be, you know—they've got to be first in this country in minimum wage.

You talk about the previous Conservative government, who created 1.2 million jobs in this province. That's something we're proud of, and I guess something we hope the other side would aspire to. Instead of losing 600,000, we should be trying to create some. We aren't seeing that, and we aren't going to see it with the economic climate in this province.

I look at my son, who left. When he finished an engineering degree, he had to go to Alberta to get a job. A lot of people even in my generation did. But when he came back to visit some of his friends here later, they were all, his group of friends, still looking for jobs. Engineering degrees in this province now don't guarantee a job in Ontario.

But some of them did have jobs. They were working at the local restaurant. Not that it's a bad job, but they were trained with a four-year degree—highly technical skills that we're really demanding our students follow. But it no longer generates a job in Ontario. They're all over Alberta and Manitoba, and they could be in northern Ontario if we'd just take steps to finally get the Ring of Fire going, but we haven't been able to do that as a government.

The people of Ontario know what's happening, and they want to see a change of government. They desperately want to see—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I'm pleased to stand before the House today to speak about Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act. The members across the road here want to know where we stand. Well, you're going to hear it.

Regardless of the title of this bill, it certainly doesn't go far enough. It goes partway. But to discuss the bill, let's discuss what the government agreed to do before this bill came into effect. The government had agreed to raise the minimum wage to \$11 an hour effective June 1,

2014. At least the government has done something for minimum wage—I'll give them that—but not nearly enough, of course.

Everyone in this House knows it has been the NDP who for years have fought for increases to the minimum wage. The Liberals implemented it—I'll give them that—but it took them a long time to get on that horse.

In fact, we have always asked for a livable wage. Somebody earning minimum wage now and working 40 hours a week will earn about \$410. The increase to \$11 an hour at 40 hours a week will result in \$440 a week. Speaker, that's \$30—oh, I forgot; there's taxes. They're down to \$23 a week, which is just under \$100 a month, \$1,200 a year. They'll be lucky if that pays for their hydro.

Everyone seems to think this is a huge burden on small business; it isn't. We offered in our platform to give small business a percentage break on that, which would counteract the increase to the minimum wage. Everybody would have been happy. But it didn't go there.

With increases in everything from public transit to hydro to groceries, this money is eaten up in hours—hours, this increase.

This increase is all that minimum wage earners will see until the ludicrously low CPI formula found in Bill 165 kicks in. For 17 months, Speaker, minimum wage earners will be stuck while they know that the basic cost of living will increase. They'll be stuck in limbo. All Bill 165 says is that as of October 1, 2015, the annual increase to the minimum wage will be equal to the CPI increase.

Speaker, of the troubling aspects of this bill, two stand out glaringly to me. First, any future increases to the minimum wage will not kick in until October 2015. Second, given the most recent CPI numbers, the Liberal plan would provide almost no relief for our most vulnerable citizens.

Last year, the CPI used for OMERS pensioners was 1.81%. That's not a heck of a lot. Let's apply this to the minimum wage of the day. The minimum wage of the day was \$10.25 at that time. Under Bill 165, that would mean an increase of just 19 cents an hour to the minimum wage. Fast-forward to this year: With an \$11 minimum wage in June, using the same 1.81% increase in CPI, that would result in an increase of 19.9 cents. Isn't that very generous, Speaker? Let's round it off and say 20 cents.

I can't believe that the Liberal government really believes that this is a plan to help the most vulnerable. I think not. It seems they haven't thought this out too well. I would hope that we can fix it, but by fixing it, I mean adopting the NDP position, which, instead of relying on increases on CPI, would increase the minimum wage by 50 cents in each of the following years. Remember, Speaker, that once they go on to the CPI annual increases, they will suffer the same fixed-income increases as many pensioners do now. We will now have both seniors and low-income earners tied to the CPI increases under the Liberal plan. We know that the CPI increases

do not accurately reflect the real increases in the cost of living.

It bothers me tremendously that this proposed increase to the minimum wage isn't really to help bring people out of poverty; it's just another election gambit. These people across the floor know very well they made promise after promise after promise in prior elections, and they know how few of them have been implemented. People know. I think I counted it: It's about 117 promises broken already. We're moving up, too. There will be a couple more before this is over.

It also bothers me that—I find it difficult—people can't get by on what they're making. They're pawns in the chess game of election fever. That's what it is, an election fever chess game.

When we do the math, it's clear that the Liberal plan would do little to help the most vulnerable. The Liberal plan would do little to help the most vulnerable, but we know that even the little increase that would be spent locally would provide a small boost to our local economies.

At the same time, both the Liberals and the Conservatives want to keep lowering the corporate tax rate. We know that large corporations are not spending money locally; they're putting it in the bank, and they're giving it to their shareholders. We know that many of those who enjoy our extraordinarily low tax rate are spending the money offshore—not even in Ontario—and not benefiting our local economies. We live in one of the lowest corporate tax rate jurisdictions in Canada and the United States.

Corporate profits are at an all-time high, but where are the profits? Do they sink it back into their business? Do they sink it into their local community? Do they sink it into their province, state or country? No; they give it to the shareholders.

1640

A recent report found that Canadian corporations are hoarding—I repeat, hoarding—nearly \$500 billion in unused funds, rather than using that money to reinvest in our local economy to help create jobs and provide a higher livable wage for their workers, the people who create their wealth. They're kicking them right in the head.

Many of these same corporations continue to demand that the provincial government keep corporate tax rates low for their own benefit, either to hoard it or to spend it offshore. Even knowing that, the Liberals and PCs both continue to push the idea ahead that if we continue to give tax breaks to our wealthiest corporations and individuals, it will somehow trickle down and benefit everyone else. All of a sudden, these people are going to become Santa Clauses, and they're going to start giving it to all the people who helped them make the money they made. I think not. I think it will go to the shareholders. I don't think it will go into our communities. I think it will go offshore to banks in Switzerland. That's where I think it will go.

Successful Liberal and Conservative governments have followed these depressive policies for years, and

they can't seem to get off that train, down that track, for corporations. Big money for big business, and to heck with the rest of them: "We'll give you a little trickle, if you're lucky, just so you have enough food to eat so that you can get to the job."

In fact, we listened to the PCs on this issue, and boy, are they off the map. They would have us believe that the problems of poverty and inequality are somehow solved by further lowering tax rates, by so-called freedom of choice in the marketplace. I really get a charge when the leader of the official opposition stands up and says he's going to create a million jobs. I don't know what fantasyland he came from. But I'll tell you, we could use probably at least 100,000 jobs where I'm from. It's unbelievable that they just throw out numbers like that. Where's the proof? Where are the jobs? Where are these employment agencies opening up and giving the people in my area jobs? It's not happening. One million—not happening.

And let's not forget the right to work. That's another peach. We'll all be working for six bucks an hour when they get through with us, and then they'll say, "Why can't you pay the hydro bill?" "Because I can't even put a piece of tart on the table. I can't afford anything. I can't pay my bills, let alone your taxes."

What's going to happen, too, if we're all on a lower wage scale? Who's going to pay for all these new highways and LRTs? Who's going to pay for all the things that we need to move ahead and advance as a society? Not the guy making seven bucks an hour. He's lucky if he can feed himself and his family. But let's have a right-to-work state.

If you look at the GDP of those right-to-work states, 20% of their workforce has left those states and gone elsewhere to work for a more livable wage. Oh, it has been a wonderful record.

Mr. Wayne Gates: No pensions.

Mr. Paul Miller: No pensions. Attacking pension plans in the private sector as well as the public sector—that's great.

What they want to do is eliminate the public sector, union, good-paying jobs. They say that the private sector is not making enough; fair enough. But the bottom line is, if you eliminate all those large groups, you're going to eliminate our middle class. There will be nobody left to pay for all this stuff. Wait a minute; maybe those guys making seven bucks an hour will take care of it. I don't think so.

Speaker, freedom and choice don't feed an empty stomach; I'll be honest with you.

From 1995 to 2003, it was the Conservative Party's reign of terror on low-income workers that resulted in a freeze to the minimum wage. They chose not to increase the minimum wage by a single penny.

I must give credit to the government; they at least give something—not enough, the way I'd like it.

Everyone says that the NDP didn't come out with a position. No, we wanted to see how bad these two positions would be and then we would fix it once again.

At the same time, since 2003 the Liberal plan to move forward on minimum wage was only a result of the push by the NDP. They had no plan for increasing the minimum wage back then, in 2003. We brought it forward and pushed it to benefit the most vulnerable. Never mind 2003; I can remember fighting for an increase in the minimum wage in 1976—not when they got into government. I've been doing this for 30 years. This is not new to the NDP. They make it look like we jumped off the train and aren't saying anything. That's a load of manure.

This bill provides an opportunity for counter-arguments and workable NDP proposals. We know that small business is the engine of our local economies, and we also need to help small business create jobs. So what did we do? We said we'll give the small businesses tax relief to counter the increase to the minimum wage, which benefits everyone. They can deal with the minimum wage increase. Their employees make more money, and they spend more money in our community. It's a trickling effect—not just to give it to corporations so they can go offshore and put it in a Swiss bank. We need to let people meet their needs, and then they will spend what excess money they have in our economy. But if you can't meet your basic needs, you're not going to spend the money. But if small business is the engine of our local economy, and we think it is, then it's almost the engine of our provincial economy, isn't it? Because 74% of the employers in this province are small businesses. We help small business, they help the people with the low wages and everybody profits. We have a producing economy again. However, that's not the way it's going.

Ontario New Democrats have a plan to support small businesses as well as the lowest-paid workers in our province by phasing in a series of reductions to the small business tax rate while increasing the minimum wage to \$12 and revisiting it a couple of years from then, not giving further reductions to large corporations but giving the benefit where the benefit is needed. Based on a minimum wage of \$11 an hour as of June 1, 2014, the NDP three-part plan includes—stay tuned, folks; I'm going to drink—

Hon. James J. Bradley: What's in that water?

Mr. Paul Miller: It's good stuff—a 50-cents-an-hour increase to \$11.50 an hour on June 1, 2015, and a further 50-cents-an-hour increase to \$12 on June 1, 2016, to be revisited after that depending on where we're at. Using the previous CPI, in June 2015 our plan would have the minimum wage at \$11.50 an hour, compared to the Liberals' \$11.20. The following year, our plan would see the minimum wage raised to \$12 an hour, compared to the Liberals' \$11.40, following a similar CPI, which we've seen previously. We're already moving the lowest income earners further ahead than the Liberal plan would. The minimum wage sets the wage floor to stop employers from taking unfair advantage of workers with little bargaining power at all. With a number of large US corporations buying out formerly Canadian-owned businesses, we know that the goal will be to keep wages low and profits flowing out of Canada. If these people get

in, everybody is going to be working for nine bucks an hour, if they're lucky—and that's a good job. Scary stuff.

The minimum wage would help bring workers out of poverty. A \$12 minimum wage is closer to the low-income cut-off than an \$11 minimum wage. The \$12 minimum wage on a 40-hour week gives an annual gross income of \$24,960. Finally, for a single person in this province, at \$24,960 they have edged just above the poverty line. Isn't that good? This isn't going to make anyone rich by any means, but it's certainly going to stimulate our dragging economy. It's going to help, because when people have money in their pockets, they'll spend it, after they pay their bills. That's how it works. But they need to put food on the table, too; they need to be able to eat, to get good nutrition so they can go to their job to work and be functional. They'll be able to buy their children warm winter clothing and will be beginning a better life for themselves, maybe even some better medicine and more stimulating, nutritious food. No, it will not result in new cars, expensive trips, big-screen TVs or trips to the Caribbean, but it will make things a little easier. It will also allow students to have some more for their education. Their part-time job will allow them to put that much more money away to take care of their years in post-secondary. It will help to ease the pressures on families and seniors who are worried whether they are going to be able to pay their rent or heating bills this month. In fact, they may not have to make a choice between the two. They may be able to pay both if they get a decent, livable wage. Stats Canada's low-income cut-off after taxes for a single person living in a large city like Toronto is about \$19,800 and for a family of four, it's \$37,000.

Recent research has toppled assumptions that increasing the minimum wage causes job loss. It doesn't cause job loss, and that's what some of the people are trying to float around this Legislature, that if you increase the minimum wage too much, companies are going to leave the province. That's nonsense. That's absolute nonsense. Over the past two decades, academic research has found that minimum wage increases did not lead to job loss, even during periods of high unemployment. In 2012, almost half of the minimum wage workers in Ontario were employed by corporations that have over 500 employees. Companies like Pizza Pizza increased profits by 37% that year. I don't think they're going anywhere. If I can make 37% a year, I'm sticking around. The increase we are recommending to the minimum wage is negligible in that profit range. Many of these large corporations enjoy the lowest corporate tax rate in North America, continue to accumulate and hoard massive profits while their workers struggle to make ends meet while living below the poverty line.

1650

Speaker, the measure of the government's worth is not just in its gross domestic product or how profitable its corporations are; rather, it's measured in what it does for its citizens and the extent to which it improves their lives. The NDP plan will help people—the most vulnerable in

our province—improve their day-to-day lives. The plan is economically responsible and will help lift hard-working Ontarians out of poverty, while allowing small business to keep driving our economy forward.

The increases to the minimum wage will be accompanied by a reduction in the small business corporate tax rate as follows—here it is, folks; you wanted to hear about it: a reduction from 4.5% to 4% on June 1, 2014; a reduction from 4% to 3.5% on June 1, 2015; and a reduction from 3.5% to 3% on June 1, 2016. Cutting the small business tax by 0.5% will provide small businesses with an estimated \$90 million in tax relief annually.

We have taken the time to listen to people earning minimum wage and to small businesses paying minimum wage. The result of that endeavour to find a practical, responsible solution is in the NDP plan. Unlike the Liberal half attempt at a plan, we have a well-thought-out, targeted and balanced approach.

The NDP plan also calls for:

- immediate action on capping public sector CEO salaries and management bonuses. I know that one of their former ministers is now the head of Hydro One. Isn't that interesting? Wow, that should be interesting. I'm going to follow that development very closely. I will be very interested in what Ms. Pupatello has to say and do when she's head of Hydro One. I don't want to see any new boats on the harbour;

- a crackdown on corporate tax avoidance, following the Auditor General's 2010 finding that the government had left over \$2.4 billion in corporate taxes uncollected while laying off tax enforcement agents. Well, isn't that special? You lay off the guys who are trying to get the money for the government so we can increase—we lost \$2.4 billion. Wow. What could we do with that? And;

- the closure of the planned new corporate tax loopholes worth \$1.1 billion annually. Well, that's another billion, so there's \$3 billion or \$4 billion sitting right there we could use.

We know what will happen if we follow the NDP plan; however, what we really need to consider is what happens if we don't follow the plan. If we don't follow the NDP plan, families will continue to struggle to put food on the table, provide clothing for their children, and an education; students will be burdened by increasing levels of debt.

Low-wage jobs are not just a problem for young workers or those who hold retail or fast-food or service industry jobs. Between 2004 and 2012, the number of minimum wage workers aged 35 and over has increased by 10%, from 17% to 27%, so I wonder if that increase is part of the 137,000 jobs they talk about. I wonder if any of that is part of that 17%. I would say a good portion of it is.

Jobs across many industries pay wages near the bottom end of the pay scale, jobs such as bank tellers, security guards, child care workers, personal home support workers, teaching assistants and flight attendants. And let's not forget our below minimum wage service industry workers; that's another one.

Low wages not only affect people's pocketbooks but their overall health, mental health and well-being as well—I'm running out of time here. Wages below the poverty line increase rates of chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, migraines and bronchitis compared to those with decent wages. So I guess wages are connected to health and well-being.

The Liberal plan will do little to help Ontario's most vulnerable. The NDP plan will take more significant action, more quickly, to help those living in poverty better the economic standing and quality of life of the people of this province.

Speaker, the reason they didn't hear—because we wanted to see how bad theirs was, and that one would be even worse—and now we know where they stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, with a speech like that, I think the member should be in the front row. Second, he should be getting more questions. He had a question today.

Now, I don't know whether he actually believes what he read on that piece of paper, because I know him very well, and he's been a champion in terms of the minimum wage over the years and the issues related to labour.

I can say he will no longer have the federal finance minister, Jim Flaherty, available to deal with these matters federally, because he has resigned from the cabinet, so this will be an opportunity for federal members from all the political parties to stand up for Ontario instead of playing Captain Canada first, when Ontario gets—I'll have to use the words correctly; there are too many pages here—done in by the federal government in terms of the formula for money coming to the province. We've been looking for all of them to be on our side.

I was very interested recently to watch the leader of the New Democratic Party, who is now the tax fighter—she used to be in favour of tax increases; she's now the tax fighter—pandering to business and refusing to state her position on the minimum wage. I know the member said she was waiting to see what the Liberals were going to do. That hasn't been the case in the past for the NDP, when they were prepared to stand up. I hope that the members of the caucus will remind the leader that she must take those kinds of positions.

I also want to remind the member that the Liberal government cut income taxes for the lowest-income people when it was there and actually put taxes up for the highest-income in our last budget.

I also recommend to my friends in the New Democratic Party a book written by Dr. Janice MacKinnon, who was the finance minister in the province of Saskatchewan in the 1990s when they hit the financial wall. It will give a clear indication of what the NDP does when it has to, when it's in power, compared to what it recommends elsewhere, such as closing 52 rural hospitals in Saskatchewan, not because they wanted to be mean, but because they were up against the wall.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Chatham—Kent—Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a pleasure to stand here and to discuss Bill 165.

With my discussions that I've had with a lot of businesses, and people involved in those businesses, being employees or even part of the supply chain, we talk about the minimum wage, or we talk about wages, period, and the impact that maybe an increase in the minimum wage could have on businesses.

I think specifically of a particular number of greenhouse growers down in the Leamington area who in fact, back when the minimum wage was \$8.75, and then it was increased by \$1.50 up to \$10.25—I chatted with one of the growers, and he said, “Rick, that almost killed me.” I said, “Well, how could that be? It's \$1.50 an hour.” Then he started explaining to me more and more as to how it could have, because he employed around 75 people. Not only did he have to now give those at minimum wage \$1.50 extra an hour, but he had to give everyone an extra \$1.50 an hour. So if you do the math, at 75 people, that's approximately—do the math quickly—somewhere in the neighbourhood of a \$110-an-hour increase in wages for that company, with nothing more to show.

My concern is this: We hear the NDP talking about \$9 an hour and whatnot. That's ludicrous, simply because we're talking \$11 right now. They're worried about digressing and what can happen in business, in industry today. Well, that's not going to happen. We're going to be moving forward with this thing. If we can create the right business environment that will encourage businesses to come to Ontario, we'll have good-paying jobs for everyone, and the unions can negotiate whatever they—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I believe I have a two-minute comment, right?

Mr. Paul Miller: Yes.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Okay. Just making sure.

Speaker, I wanted to congratulate the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for his 20-minute contribution to the debate today. What I wanted in particular to address was the information he put out there with what the NDP's proposal was for minimum wage.

The practical approach is exactly what this plan is about. We have the increase to the minimum wage, and then we also are considering the real job creators in a lot of ways in our community, which are small to medium businesses, and then we're offering, of course, the 4.5% tax decrease in order to help small to medium businesses continue to grow in our communities, because we find that those are the real job creators that stay in our community.

Yesterday I was at Sutherland's Furniture. Sutherland's Furniture, in that same location—they've changed the names. Sutherland's has been there specifically under that name since 1998, but that particular furniture store location has been there for about 36 years, and Gus Dupuis, who is the owner, has hired many, many people in the neighbourhood. He has created job after job. Gus is

one of the people who has his roots in the community. He's not going anywhere.

1700

We need to make sure that we can support local business, and in doing that, if we're going to increase the minimum wage, there has to be some relief for small business. That's what the NDP proposed. We are promoting new hires as well through our new tax credit, which means if a small business owner hires for a new job, they will get a tax credit for that. That's how we can actually create new jobs and help people stay in London, and Fanshawe in particular, because we do have a high unemployment rate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm glad to add my two minutes to the debate. As usual, let me just state some facts.

First of all, the minimum wage is going to \$11 on June 1. That will be the highest in Canada. Then it increases yearly thereafter, and here's the important thing: The increases will be equal to the increase in the Ontario consumer price index. Furthermore, if there is deflation—that is, the consumer price index goes down—the minimum wage will not go down, but it will remain at the higher level.

If there are some wrinkles in the program or the program seems not to be working or there are better things we can do, the entire program itself is going to be reviewed every five years to make sure that we've always got it right.

In short, what we are doing is we are being fair, we are being balanced and we are being predictable. We are being those three things because we've got the best advice from the Ontario Minimum Wage Advisory Panel, which consisted, of course, of business, labour, youth—who have a lot to gain by this—anti-poverty groups, and, in particular, representation from the Retail Council of Canada and the tourism industry in Canada, which have an important interest in this issue.

With respect to what minimum wage workers are actually going to be affected, the top three minimum-wage-earning categories are retail, with about 164,000 people; food and services, about 152,000 people; and culture, information and recreation industry, about 35,000 people. All of those groups have been represented in the planning of this approach to the minimum wage; that is, increasing it to \$11 and indexing it to the consumer price index and so on. We've got the best advice—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, Speaker, once again I must stand up and say that I appreciate all the comments from the speakers. With all due respect, though, I know that when someone brings a bill forward, they have to justify what they are doing to the public and to their party and to the business community. One member said that he had spoken to all groups. I don't think he spoke to the groups that wanted \$14 an hour. I don't recall him being at any

of those meetings. That was called a livable wage. I don't believe he took part in that.

I would challenge anyone in this room to try and live on \$11 an hour in their lifestyle, or lifestyle from before they were even here. I know I couldn't get by on \$11 an hour. If you've got two or three kids you've got to put through university, if you've got an unemployed husband or an unemployed spouse, you're not going to make that. You'd be lucky if you make the \$400 or \$500. Social assistance certainly isn't at a level that's even going to reach the \$11 an hour. If you wonder why people get frustrated and they're up against a wall and they give up or lose respect for the politicians or lose respect for the direction they're taking, it's because they can't even make it through life. They can't live on what they are making. So when they trumpet 11 bucks an hour like it's the best thing since corn chips, well, it's not. We've got more room to move.

As the member from Fanshawe said, we can put tax breaks to the small businesses so they're not hit as hard and can increase and go along with the flow, which helps the overall economy, because, trust me, Speaker, I would say the majority of our population is probably making less than \$40,000 a year. The family income might be \$55,000 or \$60,000, if they're both working; if they're not, you can cut that in half.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Be in your seat.

Hon. David Zimmer: I am, right here: David Zimmer. I'm not that dumb.

Madam Speaker, we would like the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about the issue of minimum wage, Bill 165. I was waiting for the government to put speakers up, but I guess that they are not going to even though they just agreed to further the debate. But I'm pleased to stand.

Bill 165, for those who just tuned in at home, which probably won't be many, is An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the minimum wage. This would adjust the minimum wage annually, starting in October 2015, by indexing it to the Ontario consumer price index, the CPI. Currently, the minimum wage sits at \$10.25 an hour, and it will be increased to \$11 per hour effective June 1 this year.

We've said—and other speakers from the PC Party have said today and when it was debated before—that we're going to be supportive of this bill, but we do not believe it is the solution for getting Ontario's economy back on track. We have made many, many suggestions. The current Liberal government doesn't seem to want to take them.

The latest: In February, our leader, Tim Hudak, put forward the Million Jobs Act, which he introduced as a private member's bill. It was not successful; the government and the NDP chose to vote against it. I don't know why they are against creating more job opportunities to put the people of Ontario back to work, because I believe there are a million people needing work, that are unemployed, in the province of Ontario. We want to see Ontario prosper. This legislation, if it had passed—and again, the Liberal government and the NDP opposition blocked our plan for more job creation, the Million Jobs Act—would have started creating good-paying jobs.

We have to balance the budget quickly in this province. Most people do not realize that what the Liberal government has created, the debt and deficit of our province, is the third-largest budget item in the provincial government. You have health care, you have education and then you have servicing this enormous, unprecedented debt that this Liberal government has put the province of Ontario in. Guess what? When it's the third-largest budget item, you cannot spend on programs that we hold near and dear: health care, education, social services. You can't do it. You are paying this enormous mortgage down.

We need to educate people. There needs to be more fiscal literacy—no question—out there. I save as much as I can. You have to put it in perspective.

We say we need to get more people working; that certainly creates more taxes for the government to pay off some of this debt and deficit. It helps us all be better as a province, and it gives people jobs, which I can't stress enough is the number one thing out there: jobs and the economy.

With the Million Jobs Act, we would have balanced the budget quickly, using tools like an across-the-board government wage freeze—that's a \$2-billion savings right there. We would have reduced taxes on employers so they could start to hire again. We would have changed the apprenticeship ratios.

My colleague from Simcoe North has just been outstanding for a year and a half, travelling the province of Ontario about apprenticeships, about the damage the College of Trades is doing to this province and about changing the ratios so we can get more of our young people into the jobs that they want to get into—good-paying jobs in the skilled trades, which we need and which companies are looking to other countries to bring into the province of Ontario because we live in an outdated apprenticeship ratio system that has to change. We have to enable our young people to get those jobs, not make it more difficult for them.

1710

Those are some of the examples that we have been giving in the Million Jobs Act. What we've said is that we want good-paying, middle-class jobs, the kind that you can depend on to support your families. I know the NDP thinks we're all going to be working for \$6 an hour. That's not true. We want—

Mr. Paul Miller: Only if you get in.

Ms. Laurie Scott: No, we want good-paying, middle-class jobs. This government has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Those were good-paying jobs. Their record over the last 10 or 11 years has not been stellar. They have nothing to shout about.

The rate of Ontario residents working in minimum wage jobs has actually gone up under this government. Do most people know that? I can tell you that I see that in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock all the time. If they can get a job—I have more people working on minimum wage than there ever were. It's shocking; minimum wage jobs are at 9% right now. It used to be 6.3% in 2007, and I think even lower—I'm just looking at this article, what it was, but it was even lower than that 10 years ago. So they've created high unemployment, the highest in the country. It's 80-some months in a row now that they're going for the highest unemployment. We're going to have the highest minimum wage in the country, but along with that—you know, we want small businesses to create jobs, but they're running them out of business. Right? We've got the highest hydro rates in North America, the highest electricity rates. You've got the highest payroll taxes. So all the costs of doing business—which are the job creators—you guys have piled upon the businesses and they can't do business: WSIB; Bill 119.

Have you not heard about that in all your ridings, how difficult it is to do business? The business people who actually want to have a business, open up shop and create jobs, which we're all talking about, they're like, "Why would I set up business in Ontario? I'm going south of the border." Let me tell you, people south of the border want our businesses to move down there, to create jobs down there. This Liberal government has done a great job of creating jobs in the United States as our businesses leave.

It's nearly impossible, I think we can all agree, to live on a minimum wage job. But let me tell you, when I talked about businesses and their increasing hydro rates, do you think increasing the minimum wage by the amount that it's going to go up, which is this bill—and we're not going to vote against it—is going to solve the problems out there for people? Do you think that's actually going to help them pay their hydro bills? You have to understand that the cost of living for the people is so high—and I tell this story often in the Legislature; it's absolutely true—they cannot pay their hydro bills. We've just seen the heating bills go higher. I don't have a lot of natural gas in my riding, but certainly they plan on going up. Propane has tripled; hydro; oil—it is hard to pay your bills and stay in your house. So they have to make those choices of what food they buy—and let me tell you, I'll say again, my food banks are busier than ever. And I have fuel banks that are running out of fuel pretty much on a daily basis. That's what it's come to.

Is this going to really improve the financial situation of these low-income workers? They want jobs. They want good-paying jobs. Do you know what happens when you set the minimum wage? It is a barrier. It is a

floor that people who weren't making minimum wage—the employers then have to look at increasing the wages they're paying their employees. That's another burden on business. Do you know what? They just don't hire that summer student. You look for reasons why your youth unemployment is so high? I'm giving you lots of them. Businesses can't afford to hire youth. They can't afford to hire the extra employee that they used to. That's why we need to get back to creating good, well-paying jobs so that families don't have to make the kinds of choices I just mentioned.

Youth unemployment, I just want to mention, is an appalling 16.5%; and I would say that it's certainly higher than 20% in the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. We want to support the future of tomorrow and make sure there are good-paying jobs for our youth in Ontario.

What happened last week? They closed two agricultural colleges in eastern Ontario: Kemptville and Alfred.

Mr. Paul Miller: Guelph university.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Guelph university involved, but the Premier said, "By 2020, we are challenging the agri-food sector to increase by 120,000 jobs—to double their output. We are going to be able to do that because there is so much potential in the agri-food sector." When you close agricultural colleges that are training our young people for the skills they need—we all want them to, and the government, I'm sure, wants them to. I'm just saying, you're not connecting the dots over there. You're closing the colleges when we want more young people trained in this trade and the Premier herself says they want a 120,000 job increase in the agri-food sector by 2020. They're not giving the businesses or the schools the tools to achieve this.

We can do the minimum wage bill that we're discussing today; as I said, we're not going to oppose it. It's just not solving the bigger problem that exists out there.

The member from Leeds-Grenville has done a fantastic job. He has been active, and within 48 hours there were 500 people at a meeting in Leeds-Grenville about the closure of the campuses and the solutions that we can do, ideas, going forward.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I've explained this before. You're not connecting the dots when you say, "We want to create all these jobs." You're not giving businesses the tools to do the job creation they need to do because you have the highest payroll tax, because you have the highest hydro rates.

You've seen the jobs leave—Heinz, Kellogg's. A Lakefield company just laid off yesterday in the riding of Peterborough. GE in Peterborough lays off. Caterpillar lays off. The list is extensive, and those are just some of the bigger companies. The smaller ones don't get as many headlines, so you don't hear about them as much.

I can tell you, this government is spending, I think, \$45 billion more in revenue since 10 years ago, and my people are poorer than they used to be. They're poorer than they ever were. They're poorer than they were 10 years ago, for sure.

So there's this revenue that's coming in, this government's spending is out of control, and there's nobody better off in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock than they were 10 years ago. So yes, something is quite wrong.

As I said, there are a million people out of work in Ontario—300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs in the past 10 years.

This bill today, Bill 165, is a band-aid. It's not solving the bigger policy issues that are out there. You have to create an environment for businesses to succeed. You can't government-mandate jobs. The government is pretty good at giving some money, and is pleased to create the jobs, but there's really no accountability with our taxpayer money for giving some companies money and then they don't create the jobs. Does that do any of us in the province of Ontario good? No, it doesn't.

You have to create a climate so that businesses actually want to come to Ontario, want to create jobs, want to partake in the training of our youth. If you listen to even the co-op programs at the high schools, there's such a burden now for businesses to get involved. They're discouraged. They're not taking as many on. That is a big problem. We all agree that that co-op program and Pathways to Success have been good programs. They have been a helping hand to help kids decide what they want to go into. But when you're discouraging businesses constantly—business has to be part of that equation, and I can't say that the Liberals have done a very good job at that; in fact, it has been the opposite. They can deny it all they want. It's just reality out there. I challenge them to go into their ridings and hear those stories that are there.

We say, where is the jobs plan from this Liberal government? It's not out there. It's not creating more jobs. Between the hydro bills and the minimum wage increase, people aren't going to be any better off.

CFIB just did a study and they asked small business, who, by the way, create 98% of the jobs, especially in rural Ontario—they did a survey and they asked, "How confident are you that your provincial government has a vision that supports small business?" Eighty-four percent of the respondents to this small business survey that CFIB did were not confident in this provincial government, that they actually were supportive of or had a vision for small business. That's pretty bad out there.

I go back again: The biggest job creators are the small businesses. Guess what? Rules, regulations, hydro costs—have we sung this song to you before? We have. What have you done? More rules and regulations. You've tripled the rates of hydro, and your Minister of Energy states quite emphatically that hydro rates are going to increase another 42%, so there's nowhere to go but up. That doesn't create an environment where people are confident in setting up a business.

1720

Do I hear every week about someone's grandchild or child who has had to go out west to get a job? You bet I do. I hear of the middle-aged men who go out for two

weeks to Alberta and work and come back here for two weeks, but not to work. They'd like to work in Ontario, but they can't because there are no jobs, so they go out for two weeks. That is what Ontario has become now, and it is awful. We have to change it, and we can change it. We have to turn it around, and you have to have bold steps.

Doing the minimum wage—again, the band-aid solutions that continue without dealing with the real issue.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture did have input into the discussion about the minimum wage. They had some pretty serious concerns—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Guelph: Were they there?

Ms. Laurie Scott: They had input to the minimum wage. Now I can't find it, but I'm looking for it. There it is. There are a couple of things I wanted to highlight of what they said:

"The intention of a provincial minimum wage is 'to create a wage floor for the labour market and to help ensure a minimum standard of living for employees.'

"However, we respectfully submit that 'minimum standard of living' is a very subjective phrase where standard of living is completely dependent on a host of considerations including wages; health; costs of living factors such as housing, food and taxes; and lifestyle choices. You cannot legislate wealth or even well-being by addressing only one contributing factor"—which we are doing in this bill.

I've mentioned other factors, which they actually agree with. It says, "Boards and committees in other provinces charged with reviewing minimum wage policy have agreed that changes to basic personal income tax exemptions, strengthening of social assistance programs, and support for continuing education can produce far better results for the standard of living of low-income workers than an increase to the minimum wage...."

"Relying on employers to carry this burden through increases to the minimum wage is ineffective, if not counterproductive, and is a disservice to low-income workers. When we have dramatic increases to the minimum wage, jobs and job security are threatened, benefiting no one."

I'm just putting that out as a warning sign. This isn't new. They submitted this. They've said it time and time again. You can go on their website.

Agriculture is a huge component of my riding. It's the largest industry, certainly, in the southern part of my riding. I've been at many agriculture events over the last month and a half. I have to say that hydro, red tape and minimum wage are the top three things I hear about, and that's good. They're giving their input. They've given it to the government.

They're just saying that they're not getting the support from the government that they could to grow their businesses. We say, "You're right; you're not. We're here, trying to help you tell the government that the changes they're bringing in are actually hurting businesses."

They've left you lots of recommendations. So have we—again, back to the million jobs plan over eight years.

You know what? The province of Ontario is a big province. We can do that, but we have to make a lot of changes. As I said, Bill 165 is a little step. We're not going to fight you in that battle. But there are bigger issues that you need to address.

I mentioned that the third-largest budget item was servicing the debt. That's a big thing. People don't understand that huge mortgage payment that they have to pay.

I believe that yesterday we uncovered—the member from Nipissing, our finance critic, did a great job of basically saying, “Guess what? The Ministry of Finance documents”—we did a freedom-of-information. It took us seven months to get the materials. Guess what? The Premier has not been truthful about balancing this budget in 2017-18. So the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Just a moment, please.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think the member will want to withdraw saying that the Premier was not truthful.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'll withdraw that the Premier was not truthful.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Just say, “Withdraw.”

Ms. Laurie Scott: What's that?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask you to just say, “Withdraw.”

Ms. Laurie Scott: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member may continue.

Ms. Laurie Scott: We weren't given the accurate information from the Premier about balancing the budget in 2017-18. That's a pretty important fact to kind of not tell the people of Ontario. We had to uncover that. Seven months, freedom-of-information, the member from Nipissing, our finance critic—we got the information. You are not on track, so you'd better come clean. The people of Ontario are not trusting you. You have given them 10 years of reasons not to trust you. When I said that was the third-largest budget item, it is. It's taxpayers' money paying that mortgage payment in the province of Ontario.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just the interest.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Just the interest. I take it back; it's just the interest. Increasing the minimum wage, okay—as I said, that is like a little step towards the bigger problem that you have—

Hon. James J. Bradley: But you're voting for it.

Ms. Laurie Scott: You're right. The bigger problem that you have is creating a business climate where jobs are actually produced, where we actually have good-paying manufacturing jobs once again, because we want good-paying, middle-class jobs. You have been scaring the people of the province of Ontario. It's time for you to be telling the correct story about the state of the finances. We said we would support Bill 165—small step. It's time

for the Liberal government to really solve the problems of the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Before we take questions and comments, I would ask the member to withdraw.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I listened intently to the member from Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I certainly agree with her: hydro costs are off the map. There's no doubt about it. But I might give a suggestion to her. She says, “How are we going to solve the problem?” She might want to talk to her corporate buddies that have got \$500 billion locked up in bank accounts that they're not using to stimulate our economy or sink back into business or create jobs with the \$500 billion they have locked up in the banks.

Does she really believe that people will be better off without a minimum raise? I think not. Does she think that lower hydro rates are going to solve the poverty issue? I think not. Does the member think that most businesses are going to voluntarily give big raises to their employees? I'll tell you, for about 30 years I used to have to fight to get 35 cents an hour out of the Steel Company of Canada. The biggest raise we got in 30 years was \$1.05, and they thought they'd died and gone to hell when they had to pay out \$1.05 an hour. So don't tell me that the corporations are going to all of a sudden be generous, help people out and bring this economy—if they take the \$500 billion out of the bank and spread it around, we might be better off.

And then, the million jobs—that's a beauty. Listen, why don't you break that down for me? Am I going to get 20,000 iron workers and welders in Hamilton? Am I going to get 15,000 Bell telephone workers? Where are these million jobs? Cripes, I can't even get 35,000 jobs in Hamilton in the last 20 years. That is absolute insanity. It's a number you picked out of the air. It's a load of baloney. It's not going to happen, and if the people of this province believe it, I'm sorry. A million jobs—you'll be lucky if you create 100,000 jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. However, it is really difficult to follow the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and get myself to that crescendo, especially with my voice. Hats off to him.

This bill is about attaching the CPI to minimum wage. So that's giving people the consumer price index every year to increase their minimum wage. In responding to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, I just want to remind her that her party opposed minimum wage increases since 1995, and it was \$6.35 an hour. Okay? Remember that. I also want to remind her that her leader has a policy of right to work which has morphed

into “not right now.” He wants to put us in a race to the bottom. Also the white paper on education: 10,000 teachers, good-bye.

We are all concerned about debt here, but I also want to remind the member opposite that in 2009, when the world economic crisis—the great recession—came, governments of all stripes invested in stimulus and invested in people, and we kept those things that we built going. That’s why we did it. Governments of different stripes did it. There are ledger sheets that are outside of this building, outside of this government; there’s 13 million of them, and those are people. Those people need those services, and you don’t see those deficits, because they’re in people’s lives. That’s what we have to remind ourselves of every day.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O’Toole: I wonder if I could share my two minutes with the member from Nipissing. I’m only kidding. It’s so quick it disappears on me.

The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock I think kind of linked the discussion about the importance of jobs and the economy to the issue of what’s an appropriate minimum wage. There’s no disagreement that this bill here is, in regulation, going to set, in accordance with certain classes of workers, the minimum wage through a process attached to the consumer price index. That’s probably not a bad idea.

Here’s the real truth of it all: First of all, there’s so many people without jobs in Ontario; that’s troubling, and I think that’s the point the member was trying to make. In this morning’s debate, the member for Nipissing, our critic on finance issues, said that the state of the economy and the outlook in the economy of Ontario is very desperate and dark.

This opportunity here really costs the Wynne-McGuinty government not five cents. This is downloading that to the employers. What is this? This is important. It’s a small business that’s trying to survive; it could be a husband and wife, or it could be the little 7-Eleven store next to my constituency office. The people there—there might be a high school student, but it’s the father and the mother that run the place. Do you understand? What’s it going to do for the people who are working at what I call low-wage or poor-wage jobs? To me, these people themselves are creating their own jobs. They’re buying a franchise. They’ve got debt. And they’ve downloaded more tax to them.

I think, when you look at the economy of Ontario today—I was cleaning out my desk today, and here’s the headlines from the business paper. It says “Kellogg’s ... Plant ... a Casualty of Changing Tastes.” Here’s another one; this is from the Globe. It says, “Audit”—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to talk about the highest hydro rates in the country in relation to this. There’s a small business in Niagara Falls that had their hydro rates

go from \$900 to \$1,250. That’s a \$350 increase. What transpired there is that they had to let an employee go. Now, instead of them working eight hours and going home and spending time with their family—they actually let an employee go, so now what happens is that they have to work 16 hours a day just because of hydro rates, instead of having somebody work.

You take a look at, you want to give help to a small business—under our plan, the reduction to small businesses, their tax would go from 4.5% down to 4% as of June 1, 2014. It would then go from 4% down to 3.5%, which is 2015. Then it goes from 3.5% down to 3% in 2016. So that’s giving some help to a small business.

But you have to make sure that the hydro rates are taken care of as well; it’s a package in how you do that. When you take a look at the hydro rates in Niagara, what’s happening is, we’re selling hydro to the Americans, and what they’re doing is, they’re then subsidizing it to a manufacturer who then takes the jobs from the Niagara region. It makes absolutely no sense.

I want to talk in the last 30 seconds about the right-to-work-for-less in the southern states that people were talking about. I challenge anybody here, on both sides, everybody here: Who wants their kids or their grandkids to work for less? Who wants their grandkids or their kids to have less opportunity, less health care? Stand up if that’s what you want, because that’s exactly what happened. There is more poverty when you have the right-to-work-for-less in the States. That’s a fact. They have no pension plans, so think about what happens to your seniors when that happens.

We have to take a serious look at exactly where we want to go in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I thank the members for their comments. I’m not sure of some of them—Hamilton East–Stoney Creek—but we have very different philosophies, so I’ll leave it at that, and very different outcomes to the solutions that we propose, the member from Ottawa South. The member for Durham gave a great example of a small business, and then the member for Niagara Falls actually backed up what the member from Durham said by saying that with the increase in the hydro rates, they won’t be able to hire people, and that’s what is possibly happening. If you put the increase on employers, whether it’s hydro rates, whether it’s minimum wage, whether it’s payroll taxes, etc., at some point they can’t hire anybody else; they have to work the longer hours. So there is a reality check to be done there. This is a burden on employers.

I’ve said, you know, we are going to support this bill. I also was hoping that the parties would support Bill 158, the Million Jobs Act.

Interjections.

Ms. Laurie Scott: They are making fun of it over there, but you know what? We want to create that many jobs in the province of Ontario. We want to focus on good-paying jobs here, middle-class jobs—whatever that

really sometimes means—but you can't dispute the fact that the people earning the minimum wage have gone up from 3.5% to 10%.

We have laid out government wage freezes, reducing taxes on employers to get them to start to rehire again, affordable energy, training more of our young people in the skilled trades, changing the ratios, eliminating the College of Trades, which has been a huge burden on our businesses. Even the hairdressers are up in arms—or their hair is up in knots, if you want to say that, about the College of Trades.

So reducing regulatory burden—those are all job creators, and guess what? When the Progressive Conservative government was in power the last time, we created a million jobs in our term by doing these things. So you've lost a million; we created a million.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a great pleasure for me to rise in this House today as MPP for London West to speak in support of Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act. I want to begin by saying that I welcome this debate, and I welcome having it here in this assembly. I welcome the opportunity to exchange ideas and consider options for the appropriate policy responses to the ongoing challenge of minimum wage, which is a challenge that has confronted successive governments for years.

I call it a challenge because whether you look at it as a social policy or an economic policy, government's approach to setting and increasing the minimum wage has far-reaching implications.

As a social policy, minimum wage rates are an important tool in a comprehensive poverty reduction plan and can help lift the lowest-waged workers in Ontario's economy out of poverty, the majority of whom, 60%, are women. We also know that racialized workers and recent immigrants are overrepresented among minimum wage workers. Racialized workers made up 13.2% of minimum wage earners, compared to only 9% of earners who make above minimum wage salaries. About one in five recent immigrants is working at minimum wage, which is more than twice that of all employees.

Increasing the minimum wage could assist in addressing these inequalities. It could help close some of the wage gaps between women and men, between recent immigrants and other Ontarians, between racialized workers and non-racialized workers.

But there are limitations on what minimum wage can do. It's just one of the issues that must be tackled to really reduce poverty in this province, and I will talk more about those other issues later in my remarks.

As an economic strategy, raising the minimum wage can increase consumer spending power and generate a boost to the economy, since any increases in disposable income for low-wage workers tend to be pumped right back into the economy. But the economic benefit of minimum wage increases can be mitigated somewhat by the impact on small businesses, which have much less flexibility than big corporations to deal with increased payroll costs.

My remarks will focus on these two aspects of the Fair Minimum Wage Act; that is, its usefulness as a poverty reduction strategy and how it can be improved as an economic policy tool.

Prior to this bill, there was no mechanism in the province to establish where the minimum wage should be set. There was no independent body of experts making recommendations about what the minimum wage should be. Instead, governments from all three political parties used an ad hoc approach to minimum wage policy, freezing wages, for sometimes years on end, and increasing wages when the political climate was conducive to implementing an increase.

1740

The minimum wage, as we know, went into a deep-freeze during the Harris years and remained locked—frozen—for nine years. In constant dollars, this meant that the minimum wage was only slightly higher in 2003 when the Liberals took office than it had been in 1990 when the NDP was in government. This nine-year freeze created a huge deficit to be overcome in the relative incomes of minimum wage earners, and I acknowledge the actions that were taken by the Liberals to implement a series of one-off increases to the minimum wage that took it to \$10.25 an hour by 2010. However, after four years of inaction, I do not believe that the current Liberal plan goes far enough.

As I mentioned, ad hoc approaches to minimum wage policy allow governments to act when they sense it is politically convenient to do so, which is why in the middle of a by-election, now with the possibility of a spring election in the air, and considerable pressure from labour and civil society groups to take action, we are now seeing a 75-cent increase to the minimum wage after four years at \$10.25. Over those four years, inflation has reduced the real purchasing power of that \$10.25 by 6.5%.

What happened over the last decade with the global financial meltdown and the loss of good manufacturing jobs, particularly in my community in southwestern Ontario, is that the proportion of minimum wage workers increased relative to the overall labour force, doubling from 4.3% in 2003 to 9% in 2011. That's almost one in every 10 employees who is working for a minimum wage job. This is bad news for the economy, since household spending drives 54% of gross domestic product. That's why my party, the New Democratic Party, identified an \$11 minimum wage as part of our platform during the last election, which as everyone recalls was in 2011. It's because we know that if people who have the fewest financial resources spend all the money they have and more—increase their take-home pay, they spend more money; everything extra that comes in goes right back into the economy. Three years after we made this proposal, the Liberals have now stepped forward to echo our recommendation and are moving forward with an \$11 minimum wage.

The problem is that when constant dollars are compared, an \$11 minimum wage in 2011 does not represent

the same purchasing power as an \$11 minimum wage in 2014. New Democrats have proposed to go further and increase the minimum wage to \$12 by 2016 before it is indexed to inflation.

What Bill 165 does is set out a mechanism and a specific time frame for adjustments to the minimum wage. The bill stipulates that each October 1, the minimum wage will increase in accordance with the consumer price index, or CPI. This ensures predictability, with employers given four months' notice in advance of the exact amount of the wage increase. It allows employers to plan, grow and invest with confidence. It ensures transparency because it is based on a process that is open and depoliticized.

New Democrats agree that predictability and transparency are important, and support the provisions of the bill to index the minimum wage to the CPI. What we do not agree with is setting \$11 as the baseline before indexing begins because what that effectively does is institutionalize minimum wage incomes always far below the poverty line. Our plan calls for an increase to \$11 an hour this June, followed by a further 50-cent-per-hour increase to \$11.50 in June 2015 and another 50-cent increase to \$12 in June 2016. Once the minimum wage reaches \$12, that is when the annual cost of living increase will begin.

At the same time, we want to ensure that small businesses are not negatively impacted by the increase to their staffing and payroll costs, and have proposed a reduction in the small business tax rate alongside the increases in minimum wage. This will provide a cushion to help small businesses deal with the increased minimum wage and ensure that the small business sector stays strong and can grow.

Our plan calls for a reduction in the small business tax rate from 4.5% to 4% in June 2014, a reduction to 3.5% in June 2015 and a further reduction to 3% in June 2016. This kind of tax policy is in line with similar reductions being made in other Canadian provinces, for example, Manitoba and British Columbia—to ensure that the small business sector remains strong. For example, Manitoba, under an NDP government, has gone even further and reduced the small business tax rate to zero.

I want to be clear that the plan under the leadership of Andrea Horwath and the NDP caucus acknowledges that increasing the minimum wage and reducing the small business tax rate are both good policies from a social, as well as an economic, perspective. Linking these measures is a practical and responsible approach to begin to lift families out of poverty while also ensuring that small businesses can grow and prosper or, as my colleagues from Niagara Falls pointed out, at least pay their hydro bills without having to lay off staff.

I know that some people would have liked to see a higher increase than \$12 because people are being squeezed like never before. Not only do the bills keep coming in, but they're getting bigger and bigger and bigger. We've all heard about the hydro increases and just the challenges of meeting the costs of daily life.

In closing, as my time runs out, I want to conclude by saying my New Democratic colleagues and I support this bill, we want to see it moved forward to committee, but we believe it falls far short of what needs to be done to raise low-income—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Comments and questions?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm delighted to be able to comment on this. I'm really pleased to hear that both opposition parties are actually going to vote for this piece of legislation. I know they will be anxious to see it get to committee at the earliest opportunity so representations can be made by the public and by all who are interested, and that amendments, if necessary, can be presented at that time.

What we don't want to see is what we've seen with so many other pieces of legislation, where there's an interminable debate in this House just for the purpose of holding up legislation so that the Legislature doesn't appear to be working. Because we all agree on this particular piece of legislation in principle, it should move quickly.

I was interested in the member's interpretation of history on this particular piece of legislation. I want to say that the government, a number of months ago—in fact, even before that—was looking at a mechanism to look at the future of minimum wage in the province. That's why a panel was established to give us advice and that consultation would take place. What was mystifying to me was that the New Democratic Party, which, for years, had championed—I'm sure the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has always been one of those who had championed—an increase in the minimum wage, took so long. They asked the leader about it, and she was bobbing and weaving. I thought it was a dodge ball game going on as she bobbed and weaved on it. But I knew that many members of the NDP caucus, whom I know personally, were very much in favour of moving forward on this.

There may be some variances in simply how far the bill goes and so on, the mechanism, but I am pleased to see—and it's an odd situation where all three parties are in favour of this legislation. I know I'd love to see it go to committee this week, if it could, but probably more realistically next week, and then passed, and I'll be happy to applaud—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to agree with the member from London West, who said that people are being squeezed. As one of the newest members here, I've been learning my way around and listening to everybody's comments. I think that everybody's kind of skirting around, but certainly what the NDP and PC caucus agree on is that raising the minimum wage is just one small part of making quality of life better for the citizens of Ontario, but done in a climate where we have enormous debt—we're making California look fiscally responsible now—done in that climate, it's not very responsible of us. It's

almost like a teenager asking their father for an increase in allowance when the father has just been laid off from his job. It's just one small part of the puzzle. Yes, we do want to get more money in people's pockets, but with soaring energy costs, I don't see how just raising the minimum wage is going to be enough. We all know it's not enough.

1750

Of course, I support raising the minimum wage, as does the rest of the PC caucus, but it falls far, far short, as the member from London West said as well. We've got to turn this ship around. We've got to maybe take some lessons from California. Maybe we have to send some of the Liberal members to a sunny clime—how would you like that?—and learn how California has turned things around.

What I'm concerned with is that we're seeing a roller coaster where we have a tax-and-spend Liberal government in place for a number of terms, and then in the province people get nervous, and I believe they will vote in a PC government. We'll right the ship. We'll make sure the Titanic isn't hitting the iceberg, and the thanks we're going to get once we bring the debt down is we'll see another Liberal—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's been quite a day in the Legislature. When I look back at history and all the fights we used to have in the steel industry to get 35 cents an hour—I believe in 1981 I had to go out for five months for 25 cents. And then in 1990, we got the biggest raise in the history of Stelco, \$1.10 an hour, and that took us three months of being on strike to get that.

I hear what the member is saying about California. You don't have to go to the States. All she has to do is go to Manitoba—an NDP government, by the way—five balanced budgets, the lowest tax rate for small businesses and one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. Five balanced budgets—NDP. I'm just saying, we don't have to leave our country to be fiscally responsible. We don't have to go to the States. Half the States are broke. Detroit can't even operate. Detroit city closed down. They can't even pay their bills. I don't want any lessons from the States. In fact, through the big recession and through the last economic challenges we had, actually, Canada came out of it one of the best in the world. So I think that we could take lessons locally, not going across the border.

It amazes me when the Tory party can sit there and say, "Well, I, too, would like to see hydro rates lowered." But I say to them: You've got corporations, \$500 billion in this country tied up in banks. If they loosened their strings a little bit, spent a little money, invested in employees, invested in our economy and invested in our local economy, there would be a lot more jobs and you wouldn't have to worry about going after them on minimum wage.

The bottom line is: There is hope. You've got to play the cards right, and if you're smart, you'll listen to the NDP.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for acknowledging me. I've been listening to the debate quite intently. First of all, I want to say that I'm heartened to hear that both opposition parties will be supporting the Fair Minimum Wage Act. I thank them for their support, because this bill is an important bill. This bill is a historic bill. It's historic in the sense that for the very first time in the province of Ontario, we are going to remove politics out of how minimum wage is determined.

I think we've been hearing stories about how minimum wage has been treated in this province for eight years when the Conservatives were in government under Mike Harris and the Leader of the Opposition. The minimum wage was frozen at \$6.85. It was our government that has raised minimum wage from \$6.85 to \$10.25 and now to \$11 an hour. But this is people's livelihood, those who live and work on minimum wage, and fairness requires that we should not allow politics in that whole process—and also predictability, because businesses have told us again and again that they want predictability. They want to know in advance what the minimum wage is going to be. What we have put forward in this bill, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, is a process by which every year, minimum wage will be determined based on Ontario's consumer price index. A six-month notice will be given so that everybody has the benefit of knowing what the minimum wage is.

We have done so by extensive consultation by an advisory panel that was made up of business, labour, youth and poverty reduction groups. They have all agreed—a consensus report—that this is the right direction to take. I'm really proud that this government has put forward a bill putting in place their recommendations by legislation, and I hope we can pass this as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from London West has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the Minister of the Environment, the member for Thornhill, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the Minister of Labour for their comments on my remarks.

I wanted to speak to the issues that were raised by the member for Thornhill and the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek about the fact that so much more needs to be done. Earlier, I had wanted to read into the record an email I received from my constituent. I think that it's really helpful in understanding what the challenges are for people working in low-wage jobs:

"I'm a father of two young boys currently living on my wife's minimum wage job. Our rent is \$830 plus hydro. This week, a plant is opening here in London, Canadian Solar, and I'm one of the few that got the opportunity to get hired. The downfall from all of this is, I can't seem to be able to afford reliable child care for my two kids. The London child care fee subsidy department just told me that they do not have funds for new applicants, and the waiting list for new applicants is estimated

to be two years. A private daycare is charging me \$60 a child per day; that is \$120 a day for both. That's \$600 a week. My starting wage would be \$14 an hour for eight-hour shifts, which equals \$112 a day and \$560 a week before taxes. Do you see how unaffordable daycare is for an average parent? I would be in the negative over \$100 a week if I started to work."

So, clearly, minimum wage is important. The mechanism to offer predictability for employers is important, but so much more needs to be done to address access to child care, to address affordable housing, to have jobs available for all of the people who are unemployed and unable to get that first entry into the labour market.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Leeds–Grenville has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Agriculture. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

The member from Leeds–Grenville, you have the floor.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm actually pleased that the parliamentary assistant to the Premier in her capacity as agriculture and food minister is here: Mr. Crack, the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Unfortunately, the Premier has shown during the past week that she is not as strong a voice for farmers and agriculture as people thought that she was. The decision that has been made to close the Alfred and Kemptville campuses is nothing less, I believe, than an attack on our rural way of life.

People who are watching at home need to understand the severity of this decision. You can't blame it on the University of Guelph, because we all know that, as a government with multiple ministries that are involved with these two colleges, they could have made a different decision. I hope that I get an answer from the parliamentary assistant this afternoon.

One of the things that I think, in government, we have a duty to do, whether you are in opposition or in government, is to ensure that important programs are offered in your ridings. The two that we keep mentioning over and over again in the House are health and education. Those are two that come up in debate many times. That's why this is a decision that has caused me so much grief over the last week. What we're doing is, we're taking two significant colleges in eastern Ontario that are providing post-secondary opportunities for young farmers and the agri-food industry, and we're taking it away.

1800

I've heard the Premier, I've heard the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and I've heard the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell talk a lot about working with them. Let me tell you: I've come to the table and I've told you that I'm prepared to work. But I've said over and over again that I think the first thing we need is a two-year moratorium on this decision. It's the only credible starting point. As I wrote in my letter to the Premier on Friday, this government has established a pattern. I suggest that the previous Minister of Agriculture and Food did the same two-year moratorium when he dealt with the New Liskeard Agricultural Research Station. That gave the opportunity for the local community to get together, work on a local solution, and I understand that report is being tabled to the government sometime this summer. All I'm asking is that we give the same opportunity to those community members in Alfred and Kemptville. They need the same chance that was given to those folks in New Liskeard.

I'm going to be debating the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, so I want to make a couple of comments about local partners—everybody keeps talking about local partners. We have so many people in eastern Ontario who have come forward—the 400 people who came on Saturday to the meeting. We've had so many resolutions of support. The United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry passed a resolution supporting the two-year moratorium, calling on the Premier to reverse the decision. Last night, the municipality of North Grenville said that they supported my request for Premier Wynne to come to Kemptville, and supported the two-year moratorium. I understand the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville county council are debating it on Thursday. The *Pembroke Observer* today said that the SD&G recommendation was passed by Renfrew county's admin committee; they supported the two-year moratorium. Again, there's no doubt in my mind that if we give the local communities time, they can accomplish good things.

Now, I did mention I was pleased with the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, and I hope that during his five minutes he'll respond to some of the questions. I want to make sure that I quote from the *Ottawa Citizen* story on Monday, where the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell supported my call for a two-year moratorium. Here's what MPP Crack said that was quoted in that story: "It's our government that set the precedent here," Crack said. "I'm sure it (a moratorium) will be something the minister will look at. I'm certainly in favour of that as an option." I guess I'm asking: Do you still stand by those comments? Do you still support what you said in the media?

My second question specifically is on Alfred college. You've claimed you've negotiated with partners, La Cité and Collège Boréal, to save the college. I know that Guelph has already started sending those applicants letters to say, "Pick another university; pick another college." I'm guess what I'm asking is: Are those same

programs that were offered at Alfred again going to be offered there under this new management? Please enlighten us. I'd like to hear your comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Grant Crack: I guess I'd first like to start off by thanking the member from Leeds–Grenville for his advocacy on what is a very, very important issue in rural eastern Ontario.

I would like to just point out that the meeting in Kemptville on Saturday, that I was fortunate enough to attend—there was a real spirit of co-operation that came out of that meeting. I think the member from Leeds–Grenville would agree with me that everyone in that room understood that it was a University of Guelph decision to announce the closure of these two educational and research facilities in eastern Ontario. We know that the University of Guelph is an autonomous body. They make decisions. They're mandated to find efficiencies in their educational programs and the programs that they deliver. I can understand, as did everyone at that meeting—and most people would understand—that from a financial perspective, it was very difficult for the University of Guelph to maintain that commitment to move forward and continue these programs. They're looking at consolidating and, yes, taking programs and research from collège d'Alfred and Kemptville to southwestern Ontario.

Madam Speaker, when I did find out about this, about a week before the actual announcement—I can tell you that the actual announcement would have been quite different than what was made on the Wednesday during the March break. Fortunately, because of an existing partnership between Collège Boréal in Sudbury and collège d'Alfred, we were able to move quite quickly in bringing people together and stakeholders together in order to have an agreement in principle that programming, and perhaps research as well, at collège d'Alfred will continue in the future. We have struck a working group. Those talks are going on as we speak.

The issue with Kemptville is that there has not been, to my knowledge, a willing partner come to the table quickly. We all know that the University of Guelph has removed its commitment.

This was actually quite good news to some of the speakers in Kemptville on Saturday, Madam Speaker, because they realized that back in 1996-97, with the actual agreement to move agricultural educational programs and research from OMAFRA to the University of Guelph, that was not the best move. We know that was done by a Conservative government. I'm not here to judge that. I think the agricultural industry knows that that was not the right way to move forward.

Here we are, as a government, Madam Speaker. We're left holding the bag, so to speak, if I could use those words. We have worked very, very hard over the last couple of weeks, and I want to commend the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for the work that he has done in bringing together stakeholders from many

different areas to ensure that campus d'Alfred continues to provide the programming for our francophone students. That's critical, and we're doing the same for Kemptville.

Is a moratorium the right way to go? I can't make that decision. That's something that, when I was asked by the Citizen, which the member from Leeds–Grenville referred to, I said I'm willing and I'm sure the government is willing to look at that as an option. Those were my words; however they're written is out of my control.

It's great to hear also that the member from Leeds–Grenville gives accolades to the previous Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Minister McMeekin, who did provide for a moratorium in order for the community to get together.

This government is committed to moving forward. We respect agriculture across this province. We respect agriculture research and education in this province and in eastern Ontario, in both official languages, at two institutions.

I look forward to working on behalf of my constituents in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and across eastern Ontario, across this province, in order to ensure that we provide top-quality education and research.

I'll do my utmost, Madam Speaker, as I said, in Kemptville. Everyone has my commitment that I will do my best to find a solution as we move forward.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Perth–Wellington has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given yesterday by the Minister of Agriculture. The member has up to five minutes in which to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yesterday, I had a question for the Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food. Her answer was not satisfactory to me and was not satisfactory to horse breeders or others in the industry.

I will read my question into the record: "Why should it take a lawsuit to force you and the NDP to pay attention?"

In the supplementary, I discussed our call for an immediate and permanent end to the government's so-called modernization plan that would build 29 new casinos while putting even more of the horse racing industry out of business. I stated that we would also establish a workable, transparent and affordable Slots at Racetracks Program. I asked the Premier, "Why won't you?"

1810

In her response, the Premier claimed that her record on horse racing is "very, very successful." Her claim is laughable, especially since she herself has already admitted that her government's decision to end the Slots at Racetracks Program was a mistake.

But the Premier's response also raises an important question: If her record on horse racing is so successful, why is the province now facing a potential lawsuit?

I have been speaking with leaders in the industry, who tell me that the Premier's spin is completely out of touch with reality. Just this morning, I spoke to a representative of the Standardbred Breeders of Ontario Association who is extremely concerned about what the Premier said. She tells me that she has watched countless question periods and feels that it's always the same rhetoric being spewed. As she points out, the Premier's typical response always focuses on racetracks. She needs to know, however, that the industry is more than just a racetrack.

The breeding industry is incredibly important because it provides the horse supply. Many breeders feel ignored by this government. Given what the Liberals have put them through, it's no wonder. That is why we're here tonight.

I asked the Premier why it took a lawsuit for her and the NDP to focus on this issue. Because of her mismanagement of this file, we can now expect staggering legal costs to defend the OLG and the province.

This didn't have to happen. I understand that the standardbred breeders sent this government a tolling agreement so that the discussion could take place and, hopefully, result in a resolution without the risk of losing their legal rights as the March 12 litigation deadline was quickly approaching. I'm told that the government refused to sign this tolling agreement. Standardbred breeders have been asking for a discussion on compensation for the last two years for the real losses they have sustained due to the government's cancellation of SARP. The breeders want to work with the government to establish a plan to rebuild the breeding sector, but obviously the government didn't want to work with them.

Breeders have specifically stated they did not want to litigate. However, the government ignored their requests and left them no choice. They now feel that they have no other way to preserve their rights. The government still has every opportunity to go back to the negotiating table and resolve this with the horse breeders.

Why did they refuse a tolling agreement when they had the chance? When will they and their partners, the NDP, ever take responsibility for the chaos they have created in this industry? We need to hear some credible answers without excuses and without delay.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to thank the member from—help me.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Perth—Wellington.

Mr. Grant Crack: Perth—Wellington; I should have known that based on the fact that they had a wonderful plowing match there last year. I'd like to thank him for his advocacy on this.

I'd like to start off by just mentioning that he did make reference to an issue that was before the courts, so it would be inappropriate for me as a member of the government to speak to that at this particular point.

But I'd just like to bring to his attention and remind everyone that, in the past, there has been over \$440 million going into the horse racing industry. We as a

government realized the importance of making sure every dollar that's being spent can be accounted for in a very transparent manner, so we made some decisions a year and a half ago concerning how we were going to move forward with the SARP, the Slots at Racetracks Program. We made notification that that particular program, as it exists, would be terminated.

What we did as a government is, we created the Horse Racing Industry Transition Panel. We appointed three very respectful former members of this House: John Snobelen, Elmer Buchanan and John Wilkinson. They reached out to all the stakeholders in the horse racing industry, and I think that that they came back with some very strong recommendations to the government on how we could move forward in a very accountable and a very transparent way.

I can tell you that the Premier, in the last year, has taken very, very strong action in order to give the industry that long-term stability that is so required when public funds are involved. What we've done is we're working towards stabilizing the industry, and we have a comprehensive plan that builds on a solid foundation and a new partnership with the industry.

What we're going to do is we're going to use that plan and we're going to try to encourage the industry to grow its revenues, grow its future, by enhancing its fan base and growing wagering revenues.

We committed to \$400 million over the next five years—that's \$80 million a year—to stabilize the industry. The partnership that we're going to continue with the horse racing industry will support an economically sound and commercially viable model of world-class standardbred, thoroughbred and quarter-horse racing.

The Slots at Racetracks Program focused on the horse racing industry—not on the horse racing industry, but on the slot machines as well. It's clear that in order to move forward, we have to have more of the focus on the actual horse racing industry.

Our partnership plan reintegrates racing with the Ontario gaming strategy by providing new opportunities for the racing industry. We're also working to integrate horse racing into the Ontario lottery and gaming commission's modernization plan.

To support the horse racing industry, the OLG will share its business, marketing and responsible gaming expertise. We're going to work with the industry to market the horse racing industry and enhance the on-track experience. We're going to research potential new horse-themed lottery products to promote the integration of gaming and horse racing, and generate additional revenue. We're going to optimize the use of racetrack infrastructure as multi-gaming sites.

Madam Speaker, we are committed to this industry. It has been a difficult year and a half or two years, but it's the right way forward.

The opposition will continue to advocate for a return to that same old program. That's not going to happen. That was not transparent; that was not accountable. As a government, the onus is on us to make sure that as we

move forward, all our partners are transparent and responsible.

To conclude, I would just like to say that there have been a number of agreements reached with tracks across the province, and we will continue to work. I look forward to very shortly seeing something that comes to fruition, which would be an agreement with the Rideau Carleton Raceway in the very near future, as many stakeholders from eastern Ontario and in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell thoroughly enjoy the Rideau Carleton Raceway.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Leeds–Grenville has indicated his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. You have up to five minutes

Mr. Steve Clark: I have to tell you right from the start, Minister, that I'm disappointed that we're both here today.

This morning in question period, you told me the following: "We'll work hard with that member opposite. We'll work hard with the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell to see if a local partner can be identified that can continue those courses...."

For the people watching at home, I want them to know that it's usually the parliamentary assistant who is here for a late show. In fact, I know that the minister and his parliamentary assistant had some scheduling issues today. So I actually suggested to the minister that we cancel the late show and that he could co-chair a meeting in my riding with those local partners that have come through on Saturday, that the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell knows that have come forward. I didn't want to have this debate. I was hoping that we could perhaps have a meeting in my riding where we could get down to business.

I want to appeal to the minister on just how damaging this situation is in terms of post-secondary education, because today, for the first time—it was a sad day in my office—we got a copy of a letter that's going out to students who applied to Kemptville for next September. It tells them that the associate diploma program in agriculture will no longer be offered in Kemptville and that they will have to reapply to Ridgetown.

1820

There's a recognition in the letter of what this means to prospective students, Minister, when the letter states, "We apologize and understand that this change could have a significant impact on your plans for a post-secondary education." What an understatement, that the registrar would send that to a student.

Most of the students that I've heard from—I know that a hundred have already sent letters to the Premier supporting a two-year moratorium on the closure of both Alfred and Kemptville. For many students, this is their only opportunity for post-secondary education. This

decision that you've made—now distance becomes an obstacle and you're going to steal the opportunity for post-secondary education, I'd suggest, from a generation of agriculture students in eastern Ontario. As minister, by allowing the University of Guelph to walk away from its commitment to these campuses, I think that you're marginalizing agriculture in the province of Ontario, and I'm ashamed of it.

I mentioned this morning some of the things that we know already we're going to lose. I'm upset that the organic dairy education program, I'm told, will be leaving Alfred. I'm upset that three years ago we were celebrating a state-of-the-art robotic milking operation in Kemptville that the community fundraised to have. I understand from the university that the plans are to remove that program out of Kemptville. I am upset that we have so many skilled trades positions, so many men and women who have signed on for programs in Kemptville in the skilled trades, some of them to use the trade on the family farm. Those programs are not being transferred to Guelph or Ridgetown; they're disappearing. To say that this realignment of priorities by Guelph is going to fit with agricultural priorities in eastern Ontario—I don't buy that for a minute. We still need that research in eastern Ontario. We still need that post-secondary education.

The francophone community in the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell's riding is saying that they want to ensure that that takes place as well, not a dismantled program where significant pieces like the organic dairy program are moved somewhere else. I think that there are a number of programs that no one is picking up in both communities. I'm concerned about that. I don't know why there is resistance to actually working across party lines and doing that, like you did in New Liskeard with a New Democrat MPP and the then Minister of Agriculture, Mr. McMeekin.

What infuriates me the most is a fact I found out today—and you should be ashamed, Minister—that there were more students applying to attend the Kemptville campus than there were who applied to the Ridgetown campus. I can't believe—and I know my disbelief is shared by all of my colleagues in eastern Ontario—that we have more students who have come forward to register in Kemptville than we did in Ridgetown. Why are we having this debate? Why can't we have a two-year moratorium and deal with this issue?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has up to five minutes to respond.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for ensuring that we had some more time to spend together in this place this evening. I was somewhere else; I came back for this, and now I'll have to go out again. But I'm here myself, and my parliamentary assistant would have ably been able to be here as well. I thought that this was an important issue. It's an issue that I really do want to be here to respond to my friend's questions on. Frankly, there was a lot that he said, and I think my colleague the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has said some of the very same things—not all; there were some things

that he said that probably aren't in keeping with our views, but for the most part, I think it's important that we understand and recognize the impact, in his local community and in the local community in eastern Ontario, of the decision that the University of Guelph has made.

I think at the same time it's important that we acknowledge that it is a decision for the University of Guelph to make. To suggest that I should somehow dictate to the University of Guelph as minister and say, "You're an autonomous organization but we're going to make you provide a program in a particular area because we think it's important that the community have that program there," is just not the way that we ought to be working with our post-secondary institutions. They have challenging roles as well. The University of Guelph has the autonomy to make these decisions. They made the decision for whatever reasons they did. There was an indication the program really wasn't working that well there at this point in time, as it was currently designed.

The same situation was the case in Alfred, which is in the riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, when he found out about this about a week ago, sprang into action and said, "Look, we've got to find a way to keep these programs going." So we've contacted local partners, and we are fortunate in that case that Collège Boréal had already been a partner at the Alfred campus, so they were familiar with it. They and La Cité stepped up and have signed an agreement in principle with the University of Guelph to keep those courses going, and indeed, Madam Speaker, those courses will continue.

I'm optimistic because I think the attention that these two institutions can bring to these issues and the passion they bring for providing francophone programs for francophone students is something that will lend itself to potentially even seeing some enhancement of opportunities at that particular campus. But there's still work to do to ensure that we get to that stage, and that due diligence now is being done by the institutions involved.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the Kemptville campus, it is a little more challenging. The fact is, there is not the obvious partner to step up like there was in Alfred. But that doesn't stop us from continuing to do work with—

Interjection.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member is heckling, and she has no idea what I'm about to say. I've hardly said anything confrontational. This is an important issue to us—

Interjection.

Hon. Brad Duguid: To be frank, the member can keep on heckling all she wants. It's obvious that the member wants to politicize this. Madam Speaker, what we want to do is find solutions. The best way to do that is to work with the local members. I take the member for Leeds–Grenville at his word. I think we can work together on this. I think he will work well with the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

I have, and the member has, and I'm sure the member from Leeds–Grenville has as well, already begun reaching out to institutions to see what other institutions may have an interest in this area. One of the things the member and I had spoken about, I guess it was over the weekend, is that it's a community that's a vibrant community, that stands up when called upon and pulls together when called upon and challenged. I'm confident that they will try to do this in this case.

Certainly we as a government and the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell will do all that we can to assist and work with the local community. We'd love to see a day where the Kemptville campus remains open. We're pleased that the Alfred campus will, and we'll work together with the member to do our very best in the Kemptville situation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1829.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brook	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadi
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadi
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
des services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle**

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Continued from back cover

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5875
-------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Wind turbines

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	5875
----------------------------	------

Small business

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	5875
-------------------------------	------

Pope John Paul II Day

Ms. Dipika Damerla	5875
--------------------------	------

Canadian Women's Amateur Championship

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5876
--------------------------	------

Events in Hamilton Mountain

Miss Monique Taylor	5876
---------------------------	------

Kidney Health Month

Mrs. Amrit Mangat	5876
-------------------------	------

Infrastructure program funding

Mr. Victor Fedeli	5876
-------------------------	------

Paralympic sledge hockey team

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5877
------------------------------	------

Agricultural colleges

Mr. Jim McDonell	5877
------------------------	------

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5877
--------------------------	------

Minimum wage

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5878
------------------------------	------

Charitable gaming

Mr. Todd Smith	5878
----------------------	------

Ranked balloting

Ms. Mitzie Hunter	5878
-------------------------	------

Agricultural colleges

Mr. Jim McDonell	5878
------------------------	------

Minimum wage

Mr. Bill Mauro	5878
----------------------	------

Hydro rates

Mr. Victor Fedeli	5879
-------------------------	------

Agricultural colleges

Mr. Todd Smith	5879
----------------------	------

Environmental protection

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5879
--------------------------	------

Renewable energy

Mr. John O'Toole	5879
------------------------	------

Wind turbines

Ms. Laurie Scott	5880
------------------------	------

Ontario College of Trades

Mr. Jim McDonell	5880
------------------------	------

Lyme disease

Mr. Rick Nicholls	5880
-------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014, Bill 165, Mr. Naqvi / Loi de 2014 pour un salaire minimum équitable, projet de loi 165, M. Naqvi

Hon. Teresa Piruzza	5881
Mr. Bill Mauro	5882
Mr. Jim McDonell	5884
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	5884
Mr. Vic Dhillon	5884
Mrs. Gila Martow	5885
Hon. Teresa Piruzza	5885
Mr. Jim McDonell	5885
Mr. Wayne Gates	5888
Mr. John Fraser	5888
Mr. Todd Smith	5889
Mr. Paul Miller	5889
Mr. Jim McDonell	5890
Mr. Paul Miller	5890
Hon. James J. Bradley	5893
Mr. Rick Nicholls	5894
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	5894
Hon. David Zimmer	5894
Mr. Paul Miller	5894
Ms. Laurie Scott	5895
Mr. Paul Miller	5898
Mr. John Fraser	5898
Mr. John O'Toole	5899
Mr. Wayne Gates	5899
Ms. Laurie Scott	5899
Ms. Peggy Sattler	5900
Hon. James J. Bradley	5901
Mrs. Gila Martow	5901
Mr. Paul Miller	5902
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5902
Ms. Peggy Sattler	5902
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5903

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / DÉBAT SUR LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT

Agricultural colleges

Mr. Steve Clark	5903
Mr. Grant Crack	5904

Horse racing industry

Mr. Randy Pettapiece 5904

Mr. Grant Crack..... 5905

Agricultural colleges

Mr. Steve Clark..... 5906

Hon. Brad Duguid..... 5906

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 18 March 2014 / Mardi 18 mars 2014

Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), 2014, Bill 21, Mr. Naqvi / Loi de 2014 modifiant la Loi sur les normes d'emploi (congés pour aider les familles), projet de loi 21, M. Naqvi

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	5853
Mr. Mike Colle.....	5855
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5856
Ms. Cindy Forster	5856
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	5857
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	5857
Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	5857
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	5860
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5860
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5861
Mr. Wayne Gates	5861
Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	5861
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	5862
Third reading debate deemed adjourned.....	5863

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5863
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5863
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5863
L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5863
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5863
Mr. Wayne Gates	5863
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5863
Mr. John Vanthof.....	5864
Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	5864
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	5864

Legislative pages

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	5864
------------------------------------	------

Visitors

Hon. Charles Sousa	5864
--------------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Executive compensation

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5864
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5864

Skilled trades

Mr. Garfield Dunlop	5865
Hon. Brad Duguid	5866

Government policies

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5866
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5866

Job creation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5867
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5867
Hon. Eric Hoskins	5867

Fiscal accountability

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	5868
Hon. Charles Sousa	5868

Hydro rates

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5869
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5869

Home care

Mr. Steven Del Duca.....	5869
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5869

Pan Am Games

Mr. Rod Jackson.....	5870
Hon. Michael Chan	5870

Public transit

Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	5870
Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	5870

Ontario Securities Commission

Ms. Mitzie Hunter.....	5871
Hon. Charles Sousa	5871

Agricultural colleges

Mr. Steve Clark	5871
Hon. Brad Duguid	5872

Ontario Northland Transportation Commission

Mr. John Vanthof	5872
Hon. Michael Gravelle	5872

Co-op education

Mr. John Fraser	5873
Hon. Brad Duguid	5873

Flooding

Mr. Norm Miller.....	5873
Hon. David Orazietti	5874

Health care

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5874
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5874

Member's birthday

Mr. Steve Clark	5874
-----------------------	------

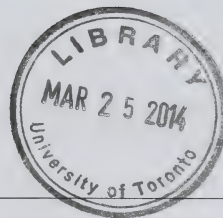
Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	5875
------------------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

CA20N
X1
- D23

Government
Publications



No. 114

N° 114

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 19 March 2014

Mercredi 19 mars 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 19 March 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 19 mars 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMPLYING WITH INTERNATIONAL TRADE OBLIGATIONS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 DE CONFORMITÉ AUX OBLIGATIONS COMMERCIALES INTERNATIONALES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 5, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 153, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 with respect to a World Trade Organization decision / Projet de loi 153, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité en ce qui concerne une décision de l'Organisation mondiale du commerce.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate. The member for Nepean—Carleton, you have the floor.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is a pleasure to rise once again to conclude my hour leadoff on Bill 153, the government motion to bring Ontario into compliance from failing to adhere to World Trade Organization rules, thereby breaking international law—the first time in Canadian history that a province has done that to the federal government.

Speaker, I'll take some of my time actually to discuss some of the implications of the Green Energy Act and why we won't be supporting this legislation but why we will be encouraging the government and the third party to do exactly what we are doing, which is conclude debate after the three leadoffs in order for this bill to have speedy passage, in order to ensure that Canada is in compliance. That said, I want to make it very clear that the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, under the leadership of our leader, Tim Hudak, has opposed the Green Energy Act since its inception, and we will continue to do that. That is why we cannot in good conscience support this modification to the Green Energy Act. In fact, we believe, as Progressive Conservatives, the best way to comply with international law is actually to end the Green Energy Act and the FIT program once and for all. We have been very vocal on this since 2009, and we have brought many of those concerns to the floor of this Legislative Assembly. If you look back to my speech a week ago in the chamber, near the same time,

you'll see that many of the same arguments I made then, I'll make again today.

We have been very reserved—or very opposed, I should say, not even reserved—

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: Ha—reserved.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I see my colleague from Sudbury having quite a giggle over there that I might be reserved at any given time in this assembly, Speaker.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: You're not reserved on anything.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: But I can assure you that our caucus has been steadfast in our opposition, and let me tell you why. A couple of weeks ago in question period, the Minister of Energy stood up and said that the Green Energy Act, the FIT program itself, for these wind turbine developments that are destroying rural Ontario, cost \$20 billion. At the same moment that he said that, I checked the IESO and wanted to see what the given supply was for that \$20-billion investment from this provincial government: 1.1% of our power supply at that given moment was from wind power. That means we have spent \$20 billion for 1.1% of our power supply in the province.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Some days less.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: As my colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke notes, it is sometimes less.

Now the government, in all its glory and intelligence, has decided that that is not enough. We're going to have to invest more and build more of these wind turbine developments for, effectively, unreliable and unaffordable power. That is driving up the rates in this province. In fact, at the last rate increase by the OEB last November, when they decided to increase rates by 4%, they cited the fact that it was the cost of the Green Energy Act that people were paying for.

We also noticed, for many business owners across Ontario, that people are seeing something we call the black box, the global adjustment. That global adjustment is effectively where all the sins and all the mistakes by this Liberal government have been added and accumulated onto people's bills, and it is hurting our employers across this province. It's effectively hurting everybody. It has now become a pattern for this government just to hide everything under the rug in the energy bills of this province, but that is hurting the people we represent.

We have said very distinctly in this assembly that not only should that FIT program be ended and not only should those subsidies stop, but if any future communities want a wind turbine development—by now 80 municipalities in this province have said they are not willing

hosts, but say there was—we have said very clearly, as Progressive Conservatives, that the only way they could move forward with a wind turbine development is if the municipality and those local decision-makers say so.

Presently—and we understand this, Speaker—this Liberal government will override any municipal decisions and put a wind turbine or solar development anywhere that it is not wanted. We have vast concerns with that, and that's why we have said that not only will we end the FIT program, but we will also restore locally based decision-making.

We also have a concern—and I want to talk about some areas like the Oak Ridges moraine and other places like Amherst Island, which are, I think, environmentally sensitive areas that are subject to these wind turbines. We have been very clear, as Ontario Progressive Conservatives: On those environmentally sensitive lands, there should be no development whatsoever of these invasive wind turbines. I want to be very clear to anyone who is watching from home when I say that places like Ostrander Point and Amherst Island and when I talk about the Oak Ridges moraine—the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus opposes wind turbine developments on those environmentally sensitive lands. In fact, that is why we have been calling for a moratorium on any future wind turbine developments until the appropriate scientific, environmental and health effect studies have been completed.

It has been the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, under the steadfast leadership of Tim Hudak, who has been travelling the province, saying we need to have those health, scientific and environmental impact studies completed. That is why we are proud that the government of Canada listened to our caucus and to other Conservative members of Parliament in calling for health studies that are now being done. We were instrumental in calling for the Waterloo Institute for Sustainable Energy to put forward their study as well, which is now ongoing, and their interim report was not very favourable to the government plan. In fact, the government is ignoring their plan, which they are paying for.

Let's recap where I am. We're ending the FIT program, as Progressive Conservatives. We will restore locally based decision-making. We will hold a moratorium until health and environmental impacts are completed. We are the only party in this assembly, and we will be the only party in the next election, that will be standing up for those in rural Ontario who are opposed to these invasive wind turbines and the Green Energy Act. We have been doing this since 2009, and we will continue to do it. It is unaffordable.

You cannot continue to pay \$20 billion for 1.1% of Ontario's energy. You add that to the cost of the cancelled gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville, and that is \$1.1 billion added to the \$20 billion. You add the fact that this green energy program is causing us to have an oversupply. When that happens, we lose a lot more money because we have to subsidize other jurisdictions to take our power. That costs another billion dollars. Our

energy rates in this province and our bills across this province are becoming so high that seniors are telling us that their hydro bills are higher than their old age security cheque. We have businesses across Ontario telling us that they're either going to have to shut down or move to the United States or Quebec or to Manitoba. That is the real impact of the Green Energy Act.

0910

If that's not bad enough, let me raise two other very significant points. The first is, the Auditor General here in the province of Ontario reviewed the Green Energy Act and the math behind what Mr. McGuinty, and now what Ms. Kathleen Wynne, have supported. The Auditor General of Ontario has said that for every job the Green Energy Act creates, we lose four. For a province that has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs, we are losing hundreds of jobs by the week. That is significant. That tells me that if you don't believe Wind Concerns Ontario, if you don't believe the Association of Power Producers of Ontario, if you don't believe the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, at least believe the Auditor General of Ontario, who has no vested interest other than good governance, accountability and transparency of government.

So for a province that has been so linked with its economy and its energy policy, I can say to you, Speaker, with full confidence that the Green Energy Act is destroying jobs in our province, it is destroying rural Ontario and it is pitting neighbours and family members against one another.

If that is not bad enough, here is my next point: We are now here today debating a change to the Electricity Act of 1998, and we are doing so because this Green Energy Act, which subsidizes power to \$20 billion for 1.1% of energy, which has stripped locally based decision-making from people, which has unknown health and environmental impacts, which is costing us jobs—for every one that is created, we're losing four—the fifth problem with this, and this is the final nail in the Green Energy Act coffin: It has broken international law. For the first time in Canadian history, a provincial policy has brought Canada into non-compliance at the World Trade Organization. The worst part of that is that this Liberal government knew since 2010, four years ago, that they were breaking the law.

I can only conclude that they were either incompetent or they were out to embarrass the federal government, which is not of their own political stripe. So here we are today. It is, according to my watch with the date on it, the 19th of March. They have known for four years that they were in non-compliance, and we have five days now to meet the deadline for compliance, March 24. We have that time to pass this through first reading, go through second reading and have third reading, but the general malaise by the Liberal government across the way is compromising our ability to comply.

So let me talk a little bit about what those repercussions will be. This is important for anybody listening at home. Breaking international law is a very big deal because there could be retaliation attached to that breaking

of the law. What could we be retaliated with? Let me think. When Japan and the European Union decided to take us to court over this at the World Trade Organization, with China and the United States being third-party intervenors, this is what could happen: a trade war could be launched on Ontario for some of our products, such as our beef, our automobiles or it could be our Niagara wine. We could be into a full-fledged trade war.

Don't take my word for it. Take the words of the international trade lawyers I've consulted with, like Cyndee Todgham Cherniak and Jon Johnson. These are very respected names in the international trade world, they are respected lawyers here in the city of Toronto, and they have counselled me, as well as other members of the Progressive Conservative caucus, on the pitfalls of not meeting compliance by March 24.

So as I stated before, I will be the only speaker on behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservatives. We believe that the best way to deal with the compliance is to abolish the Green Energy Act in its entirety. However, recognizing that this Liberal government has put our nation in a very awkward position of almost starting an international trade war, we are going to allow the New Democrats and the Liberals to do what they do best, which is to vote together, to prop one another up and to enjoy the coalition they have had for the past number of years.

But I am going to maintain, as my Progressive Conservative colleagues have since the day this Green Energy Act was brought in, that it is not the right plan for the province of Ontario. The right plan for the province of Ontario is to rip up the Green Energy Act. It is to end the Green Energy Act. It is to stop the FIT program, to end the subsidies. It is to provide locally based decision-making. It is to have a moratorium until health and environmental impacts have been studied. It is to focus our energy policy once again on economic policy and it is to ensure that we are not breaking any environmental, international or health laws. That is the desire of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus. When you have the highest industrial hydro rates in North America, you have to understand that the key and the centrepiece of their energy policy has failed, and that is this Green Energy Act.

Speaker, I've had the opportunity many times to address this assembly on this particular Green Energy Act. In fact, I would be remiss not to once again in this assembly provide a great deal of credit to my seatmate from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, who was the energy critic at the time it was first introduced. I'd also like to give credit to my colleague Vic Fedeli, who was the critic for the energy file previous to me, who wrote our white paper on affordable energy. He was critical on where we are going to go in the future.

Of course, we have to talk about Ms. Green Energy herself, the person who came to this assembly on day one fighting wind turbines in her community of Huron-Bruce, Lisa Thompson. She has been a vocal advocate for the people across this province, not just in her riding,

who are tired of the Green Energy Act. She comes here with a sense of purpose. She understands what their concerns are. She understands their plight.

In fact, it was Lisa Thompson who, a year ago almost this month, brought to this assembly the fact that this Liberal government was breaching and breaking international law. She told them a year ago they needed to comply. What took them so long? What took them 11 and a half months? Why did they drag their feet? Why are they costing Ontarians more money? Why are they trying to send more jobs out of this province? Why are they trying to embarrass the federal government? Lisa Thompson, John Yakabuski, Vic Fedeli, Tim Hudak, the rest of us—we want to know why. We want to understand from this Liberal government why their rigid ideology could plunge our province into an international trade war and cost us 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Why would they put hydro rates in this province to a point where people can't afford to pay their bills? Why would they do this? These are the questions the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus has, and we believe the only way to answer any of those questions is to rip up the Green Energy Act that was brought in by George Smitherman once and for all.

I'm proud that my leader, Tim Hudak, has travelled this province, has told business leaders, has told seniors, has told farmers, has told everybody who will listen that the only option in the next election to restore locally based decision-making and bring back sound economic-based policy for energy that will ensure that our farmland remains agricultural is Tim Hudak. I am proud to be on that team, Speaker, because I have, in my own community, the threat of a wind turbine development in North Gower.

I want to once again speak to the people I represent through Jane Wilson, the chair of the North Gower wind action committee. I want them to know back home that I am going to continue to fight for you. I am going to continue to stand up and oppose this Green Energy Act and I am going to continue to stand up in the Ontario Legislature to fight that wind turbine development in North Gower. We're going to continue to do it, and we're going to continue to use every available opportunity for debate to expose the problems with the Green Energy Act.

0920

We're going to continue to talk about that embarrassing \$20-billion number for 1.1% of our energy supply. We're going to continue to talk about the Auditor General's report that says that for every job they create, they lose four more as a result of the Green Energy Act and its high prices. We're going to continue to talk about those 80 municipalities across this wonderful province of ours who are opposed to wind turbine developments, who don't want them and want their local say restored. And we're going to continue to remind this assembly that Health Canada and the Waterloo Institute for Sustainable Energy are looking at this Green Energy Act and they are talking about its implications. They are studying its rami-

fications and they will report. These are the real challenges with the Green Energy Act, and, as I've stated on a number of occasions, the final nail in this Green Energy Act is that we are non-compliant with international trade law.

I understand that, from time to time, people in this assembly have differences of opinion, but the facts in opposing the Green Energy Act more than speak for themselves. Again, I suggest to you this, humbly: It is not just the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus who is saying this. It's effectively every rural municipality in this province. It's effectively every person who's lost their job because their company can't afford the high energy prices. It is effectively every senior whose old age security cheque is smaller than their hydro bill. We are speaking on behalf of those people.

I feel very confidently that we have made our case, so I will repeat this for the third and final time: We believe the best way to become compliant with the international trade law is to rip up the Green Energy Act. That said, we will not stand in the way of this province becoming compliant because, after all, we do not want to embarrass our federal government as this government has just done, and we do not want to plunge our province into an international trade war in which we will cost further jobs and more hardship on the wonderful people of this province.

So I submit to you, to the Liberals, do the right thing. Rip up the Green Energy Act. And if you're not prepared to do that, get this done right away. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have to admit that I like the member from Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: But?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But it doesn't prevent me from disagreeing with her, obviously. That's what I wanted to say.

She speaks about the Liberal Party having a rigid ideology on wind, which is an interesting concept to attach to the whole notion of wind. I would remind the member that the rigid ideology was committed by the former leader of the Conservative Party, who actually privatized a lot of the energy deals and hydro deals that gave away anywhere from \$600 million to \$1 billion to private companies to put in their own deep pockets, taking it away from men and women who desperately needed a little support. That is rigid ideology continued by my Liberal friends with whom every now and then we are in lockstep. They have kept that ideology rigidly in their hands, supporting the Mike Harris regime. That is ideology.

There's no doubt that we are subsidizing—we, Ontarians, are subsidizing private power initiated by the Mike Harris regime and continued by the Liberals. That's how we subsidize them, and they don't talk about that. They simply talk about wind and their obsession with wind. We agree with them that the Liberals have not done that very well, that we have overpaid in that regard and we've

not consulted communities very well. Because if they're on board, it's going to be okay; if they're not, it's going to be a problem. We agree with that, but we should be looking to the Quebec model because Quebecers have done this well in terms of negotiating great deals with Americans. That's the way we should be going, not the way this government has done it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, this bill is a very simple one. It asks the Legislature to repeal one section of the Electricity Act, 1998, and that one section deals with domestic content requirements for Ontario renewable wind projects. Repealing that one section accomplishes the goal of this bill.

The Progressive Conservative Party has said, and my colleague from Nepean—Carleton said very clearly, that they don't want to stand in the way of complying with the World Trade Organization ruling. So that's very easy: Stand up and ask for unanimous consent to pass this bill at second and third reading—it is a single section—and we're done. That's all there is to it. That's all there is to this bill.

Speaker, what this does is protect Ontario's investment in renewable energy, the direction that the rest of the world has been going in. Ontario is North America's leader in the development and deployment of clean, green, renewable energy.

I know they would like to throw it out. I know they'd like to go back to burning coal. I know they'd like to go back to the 20th century. I know they'd like to go back to exactly what they were doing before. But that's not what Ontarians want. That's not the direction that the world is going in.

What we've got here before the Legislature is a single, simple bill that asks the Legislature and its members, honourable members all, to repeal a single section of the Electricity Act, 1998. That single section, that one act, will bring Ontario into compliance with the World Trade Organization ruling.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to comment on the address by our energy critic, my colleague from Nepean—Carleton.

She raises some very, very good points. We, as legislators, come here and pass laws, and we expect that the people will abide by those laws. That is the responsibility of a citizen in an orderly community: to abide by the law.

But we have a government here that wantonly broke the law, broke the international trade laws, and knowingly did it.

Interjection: Shameful.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That is shameful. What kind of example does that set? And they've taken four years to even try to remedy that.

What are the implications of passing this new bill to bring us into compliance? We're going to stop embar-

raising Canadians—not just the federal government, but every Canadian out there who believes that Canadians are law-abiding citizens, and then they have the government of the largest, most populous, wealthiest province in this country breaking international laws and doing so knowingly, thumbing their nose at international law.

What will be the result of this? Those so-called 50,000 jobs they promised, which have never materialized—they give incorrect information on a daily basis about how many jobs have been created in the so-called green energy business. Well, once we have to comply with international law, all the advantages they were giving to Ontario companies are gone. They're gone. So those jobs aren't going to be created. If those jobs aren't going to be created, yet we're paying triple the price for electricity that we paid in 2003, what was the point of this Green Energy Act, other than to line the pockets of Liberal friends and empty the pockets of Ontario citizens?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, I want to congratulate the member from Nepean—Carleton on her comments. I always enjoy being in this Legislature and hearing her speak. One thing I truly admire about her is her absolute consistency in her content. Whenever she rises to speak, we always hear the same old messages, the messages about getting rid of green energy.

While we have some concerns about the Green Energy Act, and while we totally agree that electricity prices are out of control in this province—Ontarians can't afford a 42% increase; they can't afford the 40% increase in natural gas—Ontarians want renewable energy.

0930

I look at my own city of London's Community Energy Action Plan that was developed after an extensive process. Some of the key principles that were identified in that plan: start with conservation, focus on energy efficiency and good design, make use of free heat and free light, use renewable energy and make it local. These are the kinds of principles that Ontarians want to see reflected in energy policy, and these are the things that we should be focusing on.

I find it rather rich, frankly, that the Tories are so critical of the energy policy when it was Mike Harris and the PCs that started the province on the road to privatization that has gotten us into this mess.

So I agree that there is a need to respect our international trade obligations and support this legislation, but I don't agree with the member from Nepean—Carleton about the Green Energy Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nepean—Carleton has two minutes.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to talk about the concerns of the people of the province of Ontario. During the months of January and February, my leader, Tim Hudak, asked me to travel the province on our affordable energy plan. I was able to speak to dozens of people in 23 or 25 ridings—I forget now. I had the opportunity to speak to business leaders,

to seniors and to municipal councils. What occurs to me is that the only plan that Ontarians are buying at the moment for energy prices and for a plan to move forward is the Ontario Progressive Conservative plan in our Affordable Energy white paper.

I must say, the cornerstone of making life more affordable for Ontarians is to ensure that they have affordable energy prices, and in order to do that, you have to get rid of the Green Energy Act. Anybody who tells you it's as simple as conservation also has a power plant in Mississauga and another in Oakville to sell you. I think that that completely debunks my good friends in the New Democrats.

And I think the Liberal record has spoken for itself over the past decade. I think it's been very clear that their energy policies have failed Ontarians. In fact, I just want to go through a few numbers. Numbers don't lie. These are the facts: The energy minister himself said it costs \$20 billion for 1.1% of wind energy. The Auditor General told us that for every job that is created in Ontario, four are lost because of the Green Energy Act and its prices. My colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke was correct when he said that the numbers don't lie and that we are losing jobs—they promised 50,000 that never materialized. That's important.

The other issue is local democracy. Eighty municipalities in rural Ontario have said they do not want the Green Energy Act. We stand with them, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to rise today to talk about the state of our economy, the state of our environment and, frankly, how we need to be protecting jobs in this province.

Just to refresh people's memories as to why green energy is of consequence to this province and to this nation: We are facing a period of substantial and dramatic change in the world around us. Climate change has brought more extreme weather to Ontario; it has brought more extreme weather around the world. We went through the ice storm in December where people were left shivering in the dark for days and, in some cases, weeks on end. Increasing numbers of ice storms are one of the consequences of our changing climate.

In Toronto alone, we've seen three once-in-a-century storms in the first decade of this century. The climate is changing. Even current models show Thunder Bay having the climate of Toronto within the next 25 years and Toronto having the climate of northern Kentucky. That is what we are on track for with carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that are already in our atmosphere.

Those changes will be profoundly disruptive to our lives. They will make for extraordinary tension and conflict in societies around the world.

At the same time, Speaker, the opportunity exists, just as it did at the beginning of the 20th century, to bring on board new technologies that will in fact open up tremendous economic opportunities. At the beginning of the 20th century, Ontario decided to build non-profit hydro-

electric facilities, and I have to say it was controversial. It was controversial because the private coal interests fought them tooth and nail. People in Ontario today don't know the history of that conflict, don't know that private interests not only tried to stir up opposition here in Ontario but went to leading financial centres in Europe to attack funding for Ontario Hydro at that time, because they could see where things were going. Ontario Hydro, domestic renewable power, had the potential to displace millions of dollars of investment in coal power. At that time, the business community in Ontario understood that a major competitive advantage came from having non-profit domestic energy. The ability to stop having to buy all that coal, which we were buying from Pennsylvania, and to generate our own power made for Ontario's industrial development. It allowed us to keep our money here in Ontario instead of having to ship it outside the province.

Right now we're facing another technological revolution in the electricity sector. It was hydro at the beginning of the 20th century; it will be wind and solar in the 21st century. That is simply the reality. There is a trillion-dollar market that is developing around the world. Leading industrial powers like Germany and China are investing heavily in renewable energy. They are developing the technologies that we are going to be moving forward on, that we need to move forward on.

Speaker, this province needs to be part of that technological revolution. It needs to have the jobs that flow from that technological revolution. It needs, as it did at the beginning of the 20th century, to develop the expertise that will allow us to export globally. And frankly, that is something that did happen at the beginning of the 20th century. What we learned developing renewable hydroelectric power in Ontario gave us the potential to implement our learnings in countries around the world. We can do the same with renewable energy.

Today we are speaking to the shortcomings in the strategy pursued by the Liberal government, and, frankly, their failure to put in place a local procurement process that was grounded in public ownership of power. We're addressing this issue today because unfortunately the Liberals decided to follow in the footsteps of the Mike Harris Conservatives before them and to privatize power generation in this province. Because the Liberals decided to follow that course of action in the development of renewable power, we face a challenge around local content provisions for renewable investments.

I want to say that not only has privatization endangered local manufacturing of renewable energy technologies, but it has also imposed a huge burden on the people of Ontario. I have seen no studies that have quantified how much people are paying in profits to private power companies. If you in fact take a look and gather as many annual reports as you can, Bruce energy generates around \$600 million a year in profits. There are a large number of other private generators owned by TransCanada, some Japanese companies, generating in Ontario and extracting roughly \$1 billion a year in profit

that in the 1990s Ontario ratepayers didn't have to pay. So if people are worried about higher prices, they should be opposing the privatization of the system. Unfortunately, to my right we have a party that is truly to the right and would like to privatize and drive up prices on people for everything. That is their approach.

0940

The fact that the Liberals did not use public methods, public power, to develop renewable energy has brought us into this dispute with the World Trade Organization. As of today—we'll see what they have to say tomorrow—the government has neither expressed any awareness of this reality—they haven't noted that it was their privatization strategy that has brought them into difficulties with the World Trade Organization—nor any desire to change the rules so that publicly owned generation will be able to take advantage of local procurement.

I had an opportunity to read the speeches of the minister and his parliamentary assistant when they did their leadoff roughly a week ago. I saw not a single word in their speeches about how to solve this problem by directing investment to public ownership of power generation. I looked at what the minister had to say. He said the bill that he presented, "if passed, makes modifications to the Electricity Act, 1998, that would enable Ontario to comply with the World Trade Organization ruling on domestic content provisions in the feed-in tariff or FIT renewable energy program." He goes on to speak for another 20 minutes, 25 minutes, but not a single word about alternative strategies to defend jobs in Ontario. Not a word, Speaker, not a word. He doesn't acknowledge that the core problem with the Liberal approach, both in terms of protecting prices and jobs in Ontario, and in terms of protecting Ontario from the World Trade Organization—he doesn't acknowledge that his privatization agenda has jeopardized this province. He spends a lot of time congratulating himself and his party about the electricity system but never talks about options for maintaining local content.

Happily, there are people who are thinking about alternatives. How do we protect local content and renewable generation? How do we protect jobs in Ontario while we develop a renewable energy system?

I have to say, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives commissioned a report recently called *Saving the Green Economy*. The groups supporting it—Blue Green Canada, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Council of Canadians and Unifor—brought on Scott Sinclair, the author of the study, who was a senior trade policy adviser with the government of British Columbia. This paper takes apart the government policy and the errors made by the Liberals in relying on a private power model of renewables development when there were and there are real alternatives to the course the Liberals have chosen. I'm going to quote from that study. The author talks about the decision of the final appeal board, the Appellate Body, that ruled when Canada appealed the initial decision of the World Trade Organization. He writes, "While the legitimacy of the Appellate Body's

narrow interpretation of the government procurement exclusion is highly questionable”—fair enough—“it is also true that the complexity of Ontario’s partially liberalized electricity system”—or, for normal people, partially privatized electricity system—“unnecessarily exposed the economic development aspects of the Green Energy Act to challenge. In particular, the decision to rely so heavily on subsidies to private power producers, while barring Ontario Power Generation from investing in non-hydro-electric renewables, increased the vulnerability to trade treaty litigation.”

I have no doubt for a moment that the government has hired lawyers, employs lawyers in its ministries, has looked at this from a variety of angles and understands that their core problem was the problem of private producers, not the problem of local content; that the government knew when it started that there was a potential risk and now knows, from the words of the World Trade Organization and the Appellate Body, that it’s the private procurement piece that puts Ontario jobs at risk. It knows and has not acted, has not come forward with a policy that would in fact protect those jobs and shift away from private ownership to public ownership.

I’ll quote again from this paper: “A feed-in tariff ... program provides above-market rates for different forms of renewable energy. To qualify, producers must meet local content requirements ... under which a minimum percentage of goods, services or labour must be sourced within Ontario. The premium rates paid for green energy encouraged new investment in renewable while local content quotas helped create thousands of new jobs in the province. Both were essential to gathering popular support for the act.”

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives is right: If you want to have support for a transition, you have to create and maintain manufacturing and construction jobs in this province so that people see a very visible benefit economically and, at the same time, they see a benefit environmentally.

The CCPA goes through the history of this dispute: “In 2013, responding to complaints by Japan and the European Union, the” World Trade Organization “dispute settlement authorities ruled that the act’s local content requirements were in conflict with international trade rules.”

He says here, “The WTO’s ruling was surprising to many, since government procurement policies are expressly exempted from the national treatment ... obligations of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.” Generally speaking, where governments are procuring, they have the freedom to procure locally. Many thought that that would be interpreted broadly.

“[T]his was the first case in the history of the” General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the World Trade Organization “where the dispute settlement authorities were asked to interpret this exclusion for public procurement.” It was the first time it had been ruled on—the first time.

“The WTO panel found that the” feed-in tariff “program did not qualify as an excluded procurement be-

cause, in its opinion, the energy purchased by the Ontario Power Authority was resold on commercial terms by the government of Ontario and other public hydro entities. The Appellate Body agreed that the program did not benefit from the GATT exemption for procurement but for narrower, more complicated reasons. Their decision hinged on the fact that under the” feed-in tariff “program, the product to which the discriminatory local content requirements applied was generation equipment, while the product actually purchased by the Ontario government was electricity. In the Appellate Body’s view, the domestic content quota could not be said to ‘govern’ the procurement of electricity, and therefore fell outside the scope of the exclusion.”

Speaker, it’s very clear from the decision that was made at the dispute resolution body and the Appellate Body that the problem with the Liberals’ approach is that they privatized the ownership of the generation equipment, and that with a different strategy—that is, applying feed-in tariffs to publicly owned generators, be they municipally owned, be they owned by school boards or hospitals—we would be able to maintain the local content rules and protect local jobs here in Ontario.

What will this bill do? We’ve had the parliamentary assistant stand up and speak to it earlier. It’s very simple: It ends the requirement for local content and renewable energy projects that are brought into being with feed-in tariff projects. So if you’ve got a solar array on a school, a hospital or a transit garage owned by a municipality, all public installations—if those installations are funded by the feed-in tariff program, then those bodies, schools, cities, hospitals and universities won’t be required to have local content in those generation installations, even though such installations would be exempt from World Trade Organization requirements.

0950

The Liberals have ignored the potential to protect local content requirements by simply saying, “There won’t be any for anyone,” which goes far beyond the ruling of the World Trade Organization and its Appellate Body; far beyond. What will this mean for procurement? Under the current regime, there is local content requirement. Solar panel assemblers, windmill builders have to use Ontario-made goods to a certain percentage. It has been said by the Liberals that they will export to the rest of the world, and frankly, when they get big enough they will and they should. But there’s every reason in the world to ensure that, here in Ontario, we give them a market that can be their base that they can build on. If you are assembling windmill towers in Windsor, assembling solar panels in London or developing windmill blades in Welland, all those jobs may be put at risk by the government’s action: its refusal to look at a creative solution, a public ownership solution, to the local content requirement.

Other countries with large markets and larger economies give a boost to their own manufacturers because they have those larger economies and larger markets. We need to boost our domestic manufacturers so that they can compete with those jurisdictions.

There is some lack of clarity around this bill, and that was not helped by the fairly content-free speech made by the Minister of Energy. He said what the bill was going to be, he talked about his wonders and those of past Liberal governments, but didn't say: Given that Ontario Power Generation can now develop renewable energy, will they be applying local content rules? No comment on that. If the Ontario Power Authority is going to be procuring renewable energy installations under a request for proposal rather than a feed-in tariff, will there be a local content provision in that case? I ask the government to address those questions. We need to know how much local content will be protected, how many local jobs will be protected and how many will be at risk as we go forward with the development of renewable energy.

A question that arises that the government should have asked: What are its alternatives? What can it do to ensure that jobs in Ontario stay in Ontario? I turn back to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. They write:

"The most straightforward option to preserve the local economic development component of the Green Energy Act, and to ensure that it is implemented consistently with current international trade rules, is for Ontario to pursue its complementary renewable energy and economic development goals through more conventional public procurement models. In the case of renewable energy contracts, where a public entity acquires the generation equipment, the Ontario government would still be free under WTO rules and Ontario's current World Trade Organization "obligations to stipulate that all or any portion of that equipment be manufactured in Ontario...."

"Any renewable energy project owned by a municipality or a broader public sector entity remains free to apply local content requirements in its purchases. For example, so long as they retain ownership of the generating equipment, a hospital or university developing rooftop solar panel systems under the" feed-in tariff "program could apply preferences for local content in the supply of components. In fact, the key to reconciling the act's sustainable development thrust with" World Trade Organization "obligations is to pursue these job creation goals through more traditional public sector procurement policies...."

"The most straightforward option to preserve the local economic development component of the Green Energy Act, and to ensure that it is implemented consistently with current international trade rules, is for Ontario to pursue its complementary renewable energy and economic development goals through more conventional public procurement models. In fact, other jurisdictions in Europe, Asia, and Africa are also returning to public sector-led investment in renewable energy, as experience with liberalized electricity markets has failed" to deliver the investments that they need.

This government could have brought forward a bill written such that local content requirements were protected for publicly procured renewable energy and recognized that the WTO and its Appellate Body were currently going to block them from making such requirements for private producers, made that distinction and

focused its investments and efforts on publicly owned power. It could have done that and it didn't.

I think that the government needs to address that in the course of this debate. Why didn't they stand up for Ontario jobs? Why didn't they use creative application of law? Why didn't they use the protections already in place in international trade law to ensure that we in Ontario have the jobs protected that we need to protect? They have to answer for that. They have to answer for that.

They have pursued a privatization model from the time that they were elected in 2003. We have seen the fallout from that privatization model—we are very well aware of that—large profits that have gone to private companies that are a burden on the people of Ontario. We've gone through the two gas plant boondoggles, scandals, in which it was very clear from the government's own documents that when they found it politically damaging to proceed with those plants, the first warning they got from their bureaucrats was, "If you cancel, you are going to have to pay for the lost profits. You are going to have to pay for the lost profits."

When you go into the privatization of the power system, you assume huge risks. Your ability to redeploy assets, to change the direction of your investment is shaken. Your ability to move is bound. We have paid a lot for privatization, literally in dollars, and we have paid a lot in terms of jobs.

Will this government take another direction? That remains to be seen. Will they realize that what they have done in terms of responding to the WTO is profoundly problematic for jobs here in Ontario?

Many people have asked, "Why have energy prices, electricity prices, in particular, gone so high in Ontario?" I've talked about private energy, private profit that is siphoning about a billion dollars a year out of the pockets of Ontario ratepayers—industrial, residential, commercial—a huge amount of money. Exactly what the Liberals have done following the lead of the Conservatives.

The Conservatives, frankly, have just been Liberals in a hurry when it has come to this issue. They would love to privatize everything that's remaining—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's the other way around.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Hey, it's the way they are. It's the way they are.

The other thing, Speaker, is that not only are we stuck with paying these high profits to these companies, but because there's so much money to be made in building generation assets in the nuclear and the gas field, they are constantly pressing for more, so now we have a huge oversupply of power.

We have said, and our researchers have produced the numbers showing that we spend a billion dollars a year for power that we sell for about \$300 million a year to New York, to Michigan, to whoever will take it at these bargain basement prices.

1000

We have a government that has been captured by private power interests. Frankly, the ratepayers, the people of this province who try to keep warm, who try to

keep the lights on, are paying the freight. They are stuck with that bill.

If you look at the history of this province, we developed the hydro resources of Ontario at the beginning of the 20th century that gave us a tremendous competitive advantage and gave us power at cost, something that for decades was a common heritage of this province and, frankly, commonly supported by parties in this province, because they understood the competitive advantage. In the 1950s and 1960, we started going into coal. In the late 1960s and 1970s, we started going into nuclear. When we got hit with the very high prices of nuclear in the 1990s, when Darlington came on and electricity prices went up about 25% in two years—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Do I have to say anything? You already had number 3—one more. Huron—Bruce, I've been watching you closely, too.

Continue.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Now there's a Speaker.

If you look at the history, we started running into very high-cost regimes for electricity as extraordinarily expensive nuclear power plants came online. In fact, that cost disruption, in the opinion of many, is what gave the Conservatives the bright idea—well, Margaret Thatcher probably figured in, as well, as an example for them—to start privatizing Ontario's hydro assets, its hydro system, in the late 1990s. We all know how that worked out. We all know that it led to soaring prices.

It also led to a realization on the part of the government that the nuclear assets it had were unsellable with the debt that was attached to them. There was a huge stranded debt because the power produced by the plants, if they were paying all their costs, would be way outside what the market would sustain, which is why on people's hydro bills they see a little line saying "debt retirement charge." Many people wonder what that is. Well, that's paying for overruns on nuclear power plants.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Interesting. I hear heckling from someone over on the other side. In fact, Speaker, the Liberals were very enthusiastic nuclear cheerleaders and builders.

The debt arose from those investments that went way over budget, and the people of Ontario are paying it through their hydro bills on a daily basis. Any surplus from Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One flows that into paying for that stranded nuclear debt as well—an extraordinary expense for all of us.

The Liberals didn't learn from any of that, did not learn, continued to carry forward on privatization and, frankly, in this case, have made a decision apparently—maybe we'll see if it softens in the next little while—to choose private power generation over Ontario jobs. They have to take their pick.

Ontario wasn't the only province that had money problems with nuclear power. In Quebec, Gentilly-1 and Gentilly-2 nuclear power stations were built. Quebec paid for two nuclear power plants. Gentilly-1 was never

able to operate at full power and was shut down within a few years; it was unstable. So Quebec paid for two plants and got one. Recently, Quebec decided not to refurbish Gentilly-2, because it couldn't afford the power that would come from it. They actually had people who went to Point Lepreau and looked at how that refurbishment was done—the one in New Brunswick that went way over budget and years past completion time. They concluded that this was a very bad way to do a project.

Then they went to Wolsong, in Korea, to watch how the Koreans refurbished their Candu reactor. They thought that the Koreans had figured it out better than the folks in New Brunswick. They took all the lessons from Korea and Point Lepreau and put them into their planning, and their conclusion was that even with best practices, the cost of power was about three times the market value. They would have to subsidize that plant heavily for it to run, and so decided not to proceed.

We in Ontario have never reviewed, through an environmental assessment, any of the nuclear investments that we have made. We have not done that. We have not looked at the alternatives. We have not looked at the business case. We have not pursued what would be a very sensible course of action for this province.

In this province, if we are going to contain electricity prices, we have to, first of all, make our use of electricity as efficient as possible, and we don't do that.

A number of years ago, the Ontario Power Authority commissioned a study showing that it would be cost-effective to displace 23% of Ontario's load through investment in conservation and efficiency. We're talking there of costs equivalent to about three to six cents per kilowatt hour. That is the least expensive and, frankly, the most labour-intensive way, the most job-creating way, of providing us with new electricity, something that neither of these two parties is interested in—neither. They can, in the Liberal case, speak in favour of it and then make it a sideshow; in the Conservative case—again, they're Liberals in a hurry—they just simply wouldn't do it. All they want to do is buy more new nuclear power plants at extraordinary cost. That's the heart of their electricity strategy and, frankly, one that is completely unaffordable in this province.

Speaker, we are on the edge of very dramatic changes in electricity generation in the world. Distributed generation is starting to shake up power markets in a variety of places. Just recently, one of the largest utilities in Germany, RWE, declared a massive loss. In their declaration of that loss, they recognized they had gotten into renewables too late and that the market was changing around them.

We have to recognize that we are at a point of change in the electricity sector comparable to the change in the telecommunications sector when people went from land lines to mobile phones. Suddenly, fewer and fewer people were taking on land lines. More and more people were switching to mobile. It changed the environment within which telecommunications companies operate.

We are looking at similar developments in the energy field. Already now in Europe, there are 19 jurisdictions

where solar power is the same price as grid-based power. As that happens, more and more people just purchase their own electricity-generating equipment, install it and leave the grid behind, and that leaves a bigger and bigger hole for utility companies to deal with.

We here in Ontario need to ensure that we don't get caught in a trap where we have a huge amount of investment in generation and transmission that is undercut when the world moves on to another method of providing itself with electricity.

I'll bring myself back again, then, to this bill.

We in Ontario need to be in the industry. We need to be part of developing these new technologies. We need to not simply be consumers of technology from other jurisdictions, other countries, but we need to develop the manufacturing expertise here so that we can supply ourselves and so that we can export to the rest of the world.

There is definitely a synergy between manufacturing and research and development. If you don't have manufacturing, you don't have real-world opportunities to develop your new innovative products. If Ontario undermines its renewable energy manufacturing sector, then its ability to become a player in the development of new products is profoundly compromised.

This government needs to go back, look at its bill and tell this chamber how, with regard to public bodies procuring renewable generation, it will ensure that, where the WTO doesn't require a repeal of local content, we use local content. It needs to change its bill. It needs to ensure that public purchase and local requirements are maintained.

Speaker, this government needs to rethink its whole strategy. It would be to our advantage as a province to have them rethink the way that we deal with the WTO and rethink, frankly, how we deal with the whole electricity sector. Today, it's this bill and this item.

Speaker, I believe I've set out my arguments. I believe that the message is clear to the government. We only have a few minutes left, and I think I'll wrap up for the day.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I thank the member from Toronto—Danforth.

It's close enough to 10:15 that this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to correct my record. Last night in my late show with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I said there were more students applying to attend the Kemptville campus than there were who applied to the Ridgetown campus. What I meant to say was that 2014 applications increased at Kemptville, the campus that the University of Guelph is closing, while Ridgetown's decreased.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member has a point of order. It's always available for members to correct their own record.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I do introductions of guests, I just want to point out that, from my perspective and from my observation, there's a lot of people to introduce. So I'm going to remind you of one thing: Please just do the introductions and leave all the other stuff aside. I'll get through everyone today as best I can.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'll be quick, then. I'd like to welcome Kerry Hadad, CEO of Your Neighbourhood Credit Union in Kitchener. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a fervent defender of medicare, obstetrician-gynecologist Dr. Larissa Tam, who is in the gallery today watching the proceedings. I admire her deeply. Thank you for being here, Dr. Tam.

M. Grant Crack: Il me fait un grand plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à tous mes amis qui sont ici aujourd'hui pour célébrer la journée de Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

I'm very, very happy to welcome mayors and councillors across Glengarry—Prescott—Russell who are here today and the staff who are working so hard right now, as we speak, to prepare. I welcome everyone in this House to celebrate Glengarry—Prescott—Russell day with us in 247. It's great to have the warden, le président des Comtés unis, M. Jean Paul St. Pierre. Bienvenue, tout le monde.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to welcome to the chamber Harry Joosten, Libro Credit Union; Jennifer Rowe, Meridian Credit Union; and Alena Thouin from Central 1 Credit Union. Welcome.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is my great pleasure today to introduce to the House two good friends of mine; they actually live in Trinity—Spadina. Phyllis Amber is over here—Phyllis, give us a wave—and her husband, Arnold Amber, right here. They're very good friends.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to introduce and welcome Antero Elo—he's the president of the Finnish Credit Union; his office is next to my constituency office—and as well, Robert Paterson, who is president of Alterna Savings. Welcome.

I want to recognize one of my constituents, Bonnie Booth, who is here with Toronto Community Housing's Close the Housing Gap campaign.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce a couple of guests of mine today: Roy Taylor and Ralph Mooney from my constituency. Welcome, guys.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my privilege to introduce James Olson, chief administrative officer of First Ontario Credit Union, who is here at Queen's Park as part of the Central 1 Credit Union lobby day. James works at First Ontario's head office in Hamilton.

Mr. Bill Mauro: It's my pleasure to introduce to the House, from Thunder Bay, 17-year CEO of the Copperfin Credit Union and currently on the board of directors, Scott Kennedy. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to introduce Taras Pidzamecky, who is the CEO and general counsel for the Ukrainian Credit Union, which by the way is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to welcome the people that are here—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: The new member from Hamilton East, I guess.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll say it a third time: Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you. I'd like to introduce two of my staffers from my constituency office, Todd White and Jason White. They're in the back behind your chair.

Also, I don't know if you're going to get to the minister, but there are three McMaster students here who are taking direction from my staff and learning.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: This morning, I'd like to welcome Sean Gadon, the director of Toronto's Affordable Housing Office; Bud Purves, the chair of the Toronto Community Housing Corp., and the CEO, Eugene Jones; Domanique Grant, president of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto; Harvey Cooper, the manager of government relations of CHF Canada-Ontario region; Ginny Adey, the manager of strategic planning and stakeholder relations at Toronto Community Housing; and Simone Swail, program manager of special initiatives, CMF Canada-Ontario region.

I also want to welcome all those in the public galleries from Toronto Community Housing and all social housing residents. I want to remind members to attend the reception this evening from 5 to 7 in room 228.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Ralph Luimes is here, the CEO of Haldimand-Norfolk Credit Union, in the great town of Caledonia.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'll try this again, Speaker. I want to welcome all the people who are here today for Close the Housing Gap day at Queen's Park, specifically Bonnie Booth, resident of Toronto Community Housing; Mary Aleimda, resident of Toronto Community Housing; Tom Clement, ED for the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto; Simone Swail, program manager, the Co-op Housing Federation of Canada; Nicholas Gazzard, executive director, Co-op Housing Federation of Canada; and everyone else who is here from Toronto Community Housing. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: On a point of order, Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear pins in recognition of Credit Unions of Ontario lobby day here at Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Consumer Services is requesting unanimous consent to wear the pins in honour of credit union day. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to welcome Harry Joosten from Libro Financial, who's with us today. Welcome, Harry.

Also, from the sickle cell and thalassemia community we have Doreen Alexander, Dotty Nicholas, Lanre Tunji-Ajayi, Helen Ziafras, Dr. Isaac Odame and Dr. Richard Ward all joining us in support of the member from Eglinton–Lawrence's private member's bill today.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'd like to welcome Bonnie Booth from Toronto Community Housing; Sean Gadon, from Toronto Affordable Housing, Rahima Mulla, the vice-president of the CHF; and Dale Reagan and Diane Miles, both from the CHF. Welcome to Close the Housing Gap day.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: There are actually nine students here from McMaster with Professor White. I met with some of them this morning. I want to welcome them, and I hope they enjoy their experience today.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I also would like to welcome Harry Joosten from Libro Credit Union, and also Kelly Harris from Central 1.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I certainly also want to welcome my good friend Scott Kennedy, and introduce to the Legislature Ernie Remillard, president and CEO of Northern Lights Credit Union. Ernie, welcome; good to see you.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, we have a number of individuals here from Central 1 Credit Union. I want to welcome them to the Legislature and join with my colleagues in welcoming Kelly Harris, who heads up their government relations. Kelly worked for us for many years in the PC caucus. Don't hold that against him; he's a terrific guy and a great worker.

Mr. Mike Colle: I think we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear pins in recognition of Sickle Cell Awareness Day at Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence is seeking unanimous consent to wear pins in honour of sickle cell anemia awareness. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to introduce the students behind me from Midorioka High School in Japan, who are visiting Centennial CVI in Guelph, which happens to be the school that my kids went to. So, welcome very much. The students are part of the Kakehashi exchange program, which means "bridge for tomorrow" and promotes mutual understanding among the students of Japan and Canada.

1040

Mr. Frank Klees: I'd like to extend a special invitation to Mr. Richard Senechal, who is the president and CEO of Duca Credit Union.

I also want to give special recognition to Mr. Larry Smith, who is the CEO of Pace Credit Union, as well as the CFO of that great organization, Mr. Phillip Smith.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would also like to welcome all the members who are here for Close the Housing Gap.

Also, I would like to welcome Adrienne McKenzie, CEO of Victory Community Credit Union, located in the great riding of York South–Weston.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'd like to welcome three special guests from the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators. They're right up at the top, here. Visiting us from Minnesota today are Great Lakes regional coordinators Senator Jane Krentz and Senator John Howe.

I would also like to welcome J.R. Tolbert, the executive director of the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators. They do great work. I invite all my colleagues to meet with the NCEL today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to welcome Mike Shepherd from first priority credit union in Milton, Georgetown and Acton. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I would like to welcome Kevin Dorse, manager of advocacy for Credit Union Central of Canada, which is located in the great community of Ottawa Centre.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm pleased to welcome to Queen's Park today the Electricity Distributors Association. They're having a reception and all members are invited to attend early this evening.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Please help me welcome the grade 10 students from St. Augustine Catholic High School in Markham.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Speaker, no relation to the Minister of Energy, Bob Chiarelli: I'd like to welcome to the House David Chiarelli from York West, a retired teacher who has been serving our young kids for so many years. Welcome to the House.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to welcome my friend and colleague from the city of Toronto Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to introduce Jennifer Rowe, chief marketing officer, Meridian Credit Union in St. Catharines, who is joining us today.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Lori Gaudette. She's the CEO of the Oshawa Community Credit Union. Welcome, Lori. She's here, of course, with Credit Unions of Ontario.

If I may, I'd like to also acknowledge that visiting today are grade 5 students from St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic Elementary School in my great riding of Pickering–Scarborough East. I'm looking forward to meeting them after question period.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to welcome my friends and former colleagues from the social housing sector who are here today for the Close the Housing Gap campaign. It's so wonderful to see you in the House.

I'd also like to welcome Jason Rodricks, who is a social entrepreneur and community advocate, who is also here.

Mr. Mike Colle: On Sickle Cell and Thalassemia Awareness Day, I'd like to welcome the president of the Thalassemia Foundation of Canada, Helen Ziavras,

who's here; the president of the Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario, Lanre Tunji-Ajayi, who's here; Dr. Odame from SickKids hospital, who's here; and my good friend Sherman Moore who's here for Sickle Cell Awareness Day. Welcome.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It gives me great pleasure to introduce today in the Legislative Assembly members of Credit Unions of Ontario. They include Mr. Don Wright, president and CEO of Central 1 Credit Union; and Taras Pidzamecky, CEO and general counsel of the Ukrainian Credit Union.

We also have Rick Hoevenaars, EVP of finance and CFO of Libro Credit Union, and Kelly Harris, government relations regional director of Central 1 Credit Union. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Just in case we missed anyone, could we welcome everyone else who wasn't mentioned, please? Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm glad the member from Windsor–Tecumseh picked up on what I used to do.

We welcome all our guests, and thank you for your patience. I appreciate that it does put some people on the waiting game.

I do have an important announcement to make before we get to question period and would seek every single member's attention.

FIRE DRILL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to ask for the indulgence of the House, just for a few moments, to address the fire drill that was conducted in this building yesterday.

While I can appreciate that it may present an inconvenience to some, fire drills are an exercise in due diligence, ensuring compliance with fire regulations, something that I, as Speaker, am responsible for. It is an important safety exercise that is only effective if it is conducted at a time when occupancy and business are in the normal-to-peak range.

Having received the preliminary report of yesterday's drill, I was generally encouraged by the response and want to express sincere appreciation to the vast majority of occupants who participated.

However, I was also disappointed to learn that certain occupants, including some MPPs, declined to evacuate the building.

I cannot stress strongly enough that the purpose of these fire drills is to certify that the proper procedures are in place for your safety and the safety of all staff and visitors, so that all occupants—members and staff alike—are fully aware of the appropriate evacuation and re-entry procedures.

Non-compliance with an evacuation order, even during a drill, is a serious and, in my view, foolhardy infraction of fire safety guidelines. I would hope that members of provincial Parliament would offer some leadership in

this respect, and I trust that I can be assured of full co-operation in the next fire drill we do have.

I appreciate all of your activities. This does say something about us, and I thank you for it.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, why are you unable to table a budget by March 31, the end of the fiscal year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are working on bringing a budget forward. I know the Leader of the Opposition knows that there's a lot of work involved in putting together a budget. We have been gathering information from people around the province—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Another point to the member from Leeds–Grenville: You'll not talk while I'm standing. The Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order when she's answering. No comments. Answer, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Leader of the Opposition knows that there is a lot of work that goes into putting a budget together, making sure that we gather information from people around the province, that we make the right policy decisions and that we put the right initiatives in the budget.

I know that the Leader of the Opposition remembers that when his party was in office, every single PC budget was tabled in May or June.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you. The—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order. I'm attempting to get order for your leader, and you're heckling.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier should obviously check the facts. In fact, I remember us bringing in a mini-budget—because we faced a jobs crisis in this province in November 1995—to actually balance the books and put people back to work in the province.

I understand now that the Premier says she won't have the budget by March 31, because it's a lot of work. The Premier says that it's a lot of work. But quite frankly, Premier, you've had a year to do so. If it's too much work for you, then I'm willing to take it on, my team is willing to take it on, and we're ready to bring in a turnaround plan to put people back to work in our province.

We're facing a jobs crisis in the province of Ontario. There are one million people out of work. We lost 3,000 manufacturing jobs again last month alone. Premier, stop the dithering. Stop the delay. You've got a job to do. Do

it. If you won't, we will. We need a turnaround plan in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Halton will come to order. If you want to see how quick I'm going to be, try it again.

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me just say that there is an enormous amount of work going on already in this province to make sure that people have opportunity. More than 8,000 young people have a placement and a job opportunity because of our youth jobs strategy. We are drawing business to the province; we are partnering with businesses to bring them to the province and help them to expand. That work is ongoing.

We are putting forward an aspirational, practical document, which our budget will be. We will introduce it in this House. We will bring it to this House, unlike the member opposite, whose budgets have been introduced outside of the House when they were in government.

This will not be a mini-budget. We are bringing forward a full-fledged budget, Mr. Speaker, and we will bring it forth in due course.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I didn't think I'd find myself saying this, Speaker, but it makes you long for the days of Dalton McGuinty and Dwight Duncan, when they actually brought budgets in by March 31. You can't even hit that standard.

Premier, I don't think you understand. We've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in this province. Ontario desperately needs a government that will implement a turnaround plan immediately. In the Ontario PC Party, we have that plan. It's called the million jobs plan.

Today, we're tabling a motion in the House that you'll either call a budget by March 31 or, if you don't, then implement our jobs plan. But if you choose to do nothing, if you choose not to act at all, we want a confidence vote. Enough is enough. Let's get on with the job.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, this is just another gimmick that the Leader of the Opposition is bringing forward. He knows full well that there is work ongoing to create opportunity in this province. He also knows that when his government was in office, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003; May 7, May 6, May 5, May 4, May 2, May 9, June 17, May 22. That's his record, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to bring in an aspirational, practical budget that will create opportunity and security for this prov-

ince. We're not going to succumb to the gimmicks of a party that never did the same.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, here's what I'm worried about: I think that you have no jobs plan. You have no turnaround plan. You seem to be running in circles and chasing your tails. That's not going to put a single person back to work in our province.

I met a small business owner named Scott when I was in Brantford last week. Scott is probably in his early thirties. He had nine employees—a small construction company. Often these small businesses are the backbone of communities like Brantford, Niagara and parts of Toronto. Scott said to me that before the Liberal government came in he had nine employees. Now, after tax increases, energy rate increases and more payroll taxes, he has no employees. I want to see Scott put nine people back to work, and even more. That's what my turnaround plan will do for our province. You have no plan.

Isn't it time to actually implement a turnaround plan to help Scott, to help his employees, and to put people back to work in the province of Ontario? Let's just get on with the job.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question, and I appreciate the concern, that finally individuals across the way are looking to provide for jobs. What they're looking at, however, is going back to glory days of smokestacks and low-value-added jobs, and you can't compete. You can't go back in time and try to give Scott an aspiration, more hope, more opportunity. You only do that by investing: investing in skills, investing in training, investing in infrastructure, investing in maintaining a dynamic business climate, things that the member opposite is not doing. Instead, he's gone to the Ford nation school of politics: only slogans, nothing substantive underneath.

Ontarians deserve better, and they are—when we table this budget, something for the future, something for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The finance minister, who is not capable of bringing in a budget by the end of the fiscal year—he has had a year to do so—tells us he wants to give Scott an aspiration. I want to give Scott more contracts, more money and more employees on his payroll. That's the difference between you and me. You've got no plan.

Toby Barrett and I were there with Phil Gillies, our candidate in Brantford. Scott was not the only one around the table. They all have the same story to tell. Let me give you an example: Part of my million jobs plan is to reduce the red-tape burden, to take off the handcuffs. Bill 119 was one example. You want to increase payroll taxes across the province to put people out of work. I want to bring them down and give people better paycheques with more take-home pay. I've got a plan.

Minister, let me ask you this: If you have no plan by the end of the fiscal year, will you take ours, or will you

face a confidence vote? Enough is enough. We've got to get people back to work in our province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We talk about maintaining a dynamic business climate. We introduced reduction to red tape. We eventually introduced reduction in taxes. We did so just in the last session for 90% of businesses in this province—which they delayed, which we put forward.

But let me remind Scott and others out there what happened in 1996 with the Progressive Conservatives. They tabled a budget on May 7. What happened in 1997 with the Conservatives? They tabled a budget on May 6. In 1998, they tabled a budget on May 5. In 1999, they tabled a budget on May 4. In 2000, they tabled their budget on May 2. Oh, wait a minute; what happened in 2001? They tabled a budget on May 9. Better still, in 2002, the members over there tabled their budget on June 17.

We're going to table a budget on time and in an appropriate manner for the benefit of the long term. Stay tuned.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You can say whatever you want to say about the PC government. It was clear where we stood. We did what we said we were going to do, and it was a time when people were actually working in the province of Ontario. We were booming. Taxes were low. Energy was under control. We led Canada—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I find myself in the unique position of trying to say to somebody who is heckling the member that your own members are being as loud and arguing back and forth. Let's just tone it down, please.

Wrap up, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: We led North America in job creation.

All I've seen from you is dithering, delay and study after study after study. Now you're going to kick it down the road a couple more months. We need a turnaround plan now.

Minister, if you're not capable of doing it, I've got a team here that's capable of doing that. I want people to get back to work. Enough is enough. Let's get on with it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Ontario has produced over 600,000 net new jobs. We're on track to produce even more as a result of the investments we're making, not the reckless cuts that are being proposed over there.

I'll give the Leader of the Opposition some credit. He is even more excessive and more reckless—and I give

Mike Harris some credit for doing what he said he would do. We will not do what they said they're going to do.

He's flip-flopping on that very issue as well. He wants to cut employment. He wants to destroy high-value jobs. He wants to ensure that he attacks working families. He has flip-flopped, and he is only doing gimmicks.

Ontarians deserve better, and we're going to continue to provide for high-value jobs. We're going to continue to stimulate economic growth. We're going to table a budget—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Charles Sousa: —that speaks to the needs of the people of Ontario and the fortunes of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop, please. New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Two years ago, the Liberal government was forced to adopt the fairness tax on high-income earners. They had to be dragged, kicking and screaming, to do it, and they pledged that they would get rid of it as soon as they could. The government's current plan is to hand a million-dollar tax break to Ontario's highest-income earners within a couple of years.

Apparently, this was the plan yesterday, anyways. Can the Premier confirm that this is still the plan today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As we've just been talking about and the Minister of Finance was saying, we are going to be introducing our budget. We are not going to talk about it in pieces here in the House. I'm not going to respond to a specific question when we haven't introduced the budget.

We will be bringing in the budget, and that budget will be aspirational. As the Minister of Finance has said, it will invest in the people of this province, in their skills. It will invest in infrastructure so that communities can grow. It will partner with business, and it will create a competitive business climate, as we have been doing, that will allow businesses to thrive. That is the work that we are doing. That is the budget that we will bring in.

As I have said, I'd be happy to have a conversation with the leader of the third party about the budget if she were interested. She has not so far responded to our request to have a meeting. I'd be happy to have that conversation if she'd like to, Mr. Speaker.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has also committed to opening new corporate tax loopholes that will allow Ontario's wealthiest corporations to write off the HST on entertainment expenses and company cars. Now, apparently this was also the plan yesterday, Speaker. Can the Premier confirm that it's still the plan today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the third party is picking issues out of the air that are not based in what we are doing. They are not part of any kind of coherent plan. They're not part of any kind of coherent

narrative about what she believes the people of this province need. So if she wants to have a conversation about any of those things in context, about what we really are proposing or not proposing, I'd be happy to have that discussion with her. But I am not going to respond to hypothetical assertions by the leader of the third party, because it is not a productive way to have a discussion about the fiscal situation in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Families are feeling squeezed in tough times, and they are looking for help. But they're having a hard time believing that the same Liberals that hiked their hydro bills, hit them with the HST and have scrambled to defend tax loopholes for the wealthy, massive CEO salary hikes and billion-dollar scandals, are actually going to, in any way, defend a beleaguered middle class.

The Premier says she wants to do things differently, but trying to raise gas taxes and the HST and then frantically scrambling in the other direction isn't the leadership that families need. Do the Liberals really think that this is good enough for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let me address the issue of people who are struggling to make ends meet: I know that. The leader of the third party can, again, assert that my announcement and our commitment not to raise the HST and not to raise gas tax and not to raise income tax on middle classes—she can assert that that's because of something that she said. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

We have been working on putting together a transit fund to make sure that we have the revenue to invest in transit for some months. I made the announcement simply because the leader of the third party was causing mischief and fearmongering about what we were or were not going to do.

I've made it clear that we are not going to raise those taxes, but I've also made it clear that we understand that in addition to the 30% off tuition grant, in addition to the plans for, the programs for reducing electricity costs, we know that people need investment in transit in this province.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I think the Premier is protesting a bit too much. We have the list of NDP ideas. We just keep ticking them off.

The question is to the Premier. Earlier this month, the Premier said that she was shocked by the Chrysler decision to walk away from the discussions with the government about Ontario jobs. Like Chrysler, Cliffs Natural Resources also walked away from discussions with the government. Now, this was after the Liberals had promised thousands of jobs at a ribbon-cutting ceremony to announce a refinery in Capreol. Can the Premier report any progress on these two files, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm so pleased to hear from the third party, finally, some discussion about Chrysler, because during those negotiations when we were trying to encourage the investment to come here, they were absolutely silent on this investment. Fortunately, we had the great members, like the member for Windsor West, who was actively working on the ground with labour, with the employees, with Chrysler themselves, to land that important deal.

We're pleased that Chrysler did make a significant investment both in Windsor and in Brampton. We're working with them, and we're re-engaging them, hoping to land that longer-term investment. But we continued to make these investments, in Cisco in December, another important example: 3,700 jobs coming with the \$4-billion investment. To this day, I don't know where the NDP is on that investment or the other efforts that we're making to bring important investments to this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Gee, I guess my staff must have missed it in the inbox when I got invited to those negotiations, but I'll have them look.

Families are worried about their jobs and their future, and Liberal promises are not going to pay the bills, unless you're working in public relations for the government. The Premier is stubbornly sticking to a failing plan, while company after company seems to be walking away. Does the Premier think her plan is working?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite sure where the leader of the third party is coming from, because we're making important investments in this province to the point where Ontario remains, in North America, the number one destination on a per capita basis for foreign direct investment, so I'm not sure what more the leader of the third party wants. Investment is coming to this province. I mentioned the Cisco investment—they've remained silent on that—and the Ford investment last September, which is securing nearly 3,000 jobs at the Oakville facility for a significant time to come.

We're continuing to work with our partners in business and investors overseas to make sure that these investments continue to come, and we're seeing results as well, with nearly 450,000 net new jobs created in this province since June 2009.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For years the government has been defending the same old plans that have left Ontario's unemployment rate above the national average. The Liberals keep doing the same thing, but somehow expecting a different result to occur. That is why New Democrats are actually suggesting something new. A job creator tax credit rewards the companies that are putting people to work. It doesn't just create more dead money or reward companies that ship jobs out of Ontario.

Is the Premier ready to admit that what she's doing isn't working and it's time to look at some new ideas?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I wish the leader of the third party had listened to me yesterday—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Finance.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —when I talked about the job creators tax plan. This isn't me speaking about it; this is actually the Obama administration, which abandoned a similar plan because a government report estimated that in the United States 92% of those hired under a similar program would have been hired anyway.

Our Ministry of Finance has looked at their plan as well, and we asked the Jobs and Prosperity Council to look at it. Of course, Jim Stanford from Unifor was a member of that council as well. They abandoned it, they rejected it, but our Ministry of Finance has estimated—because we're not just talking about net new jobs; you have to actually provide this to all new job creations in the province. It could cost more than \$2 billion a year to implement your plan. That's not good.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Minister, I know from past experience that the minister is involved when the University of Guelph recommends closing Alfred and Kemptville agriculture colleges. When I was the minister and I was asked, I protected the Alfred and Kemptville colleges because I recognized their value.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: When Noble Villeneuve, the former member from Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry and East Grenville was Minister of Agriculture, he protected them, too.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, why didn't you?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order. The member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no, no. When I say stop, you stop.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that my critic, the member opposite, understands that this is an issue that the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has responsibility for. I also know that as the Minister of Agriculture and Food, I am very concerned that there are programs in place for young people to be able to get into the agriculture and food industry. It's extremely, extremely important to me.

I also know that the member opposite knows that the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell has worked so that there is a partnership that has been created for the Alfred campus—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Simcoe North, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —and he also knows that we are open to partnerships, understanding that the program is not closing—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —but that the venue is changing. We are open to partnerships so that there can be a local solution, and I think the member opposite knows that full well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, operating Alfred and Kemptville colleges was one of the four conditions for Guelph in their enhanced agreement to operate, and that is an agreement with OMAFRA, your ministry.

An economic impact study of that partnership said that the campuses were crucial to the agricultural research science process and training development. Guelph is still getting the partnership funds, so if they are no longer required to operate the campuses, why did your government bargain that requirement away?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The member from Nepean—Carleton will come to order. The member from Oxford will come to order. The Minister of Energy will come to order. I'm not happy to hear that.

Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

1110

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's not by accident that Ontario has one of the top three agri-food sectors anywhere in North America. It's because we have a champion as our Minister of Agriculture, and I would put her record in agriculture up with yours or your former colleagues' any day of the week.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Todd Smith: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And he's on the edge.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That being said, we understand the concerns being raised in eastern Ontario regarding the Kemptville campus. We understood the concerns being raised as well regarding the Alfred campus, and the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell has worked very, very hard to ensure that the Alfred campus remains open. I want to thank him for that on behalf of the francophone students and youth. We'll continue to work with the members opposite—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Kitchener—Waterloo needs all-day, two-way GO service. We don't need empty Liberal promises. The Premier's announcement yesterday is neither all-day nor two-way. It's a couple of more trains in a couple of more years, still going one direction at one time, and it's another example of more promises and delays from this Liberal government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Come to order. Minister of Education, come to order. If you guys haven't figured it out, I'm in the mood. I'm just waiting for the right moment.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would you like to be the first?

Please finish.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is not two-way and it is not all-day. It's another example of more promises and delays from this Liberal government. My question to the Premier: Why can't the good people of Kitchener—Waterloo get two-way, all-day GO service?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's exactly what the people of Kitchener—Waterloo are going to get, and the people of Guelph and all the stops in between. We are bringing two-way, full-day GO train service to Kitchener—Waterloo, and the investment that we are putting in place will create more than 33,000 net new jobs. So it's a double bonus. By the end of 2016, Metrolinx will add four additional trains, two in the morning and two in the afternoon, to serve the Kitchener station. That will add 1,000 additional daily passengers. We know that you have to take steps. You have to start on delivering this kind of service. This is a concrete proposal that we are going to be bringing forward in our budget.

What I think the people of Kitchener—Waterloo need to understand is that the member opposite is part of a party that has absolutely no plan for transit.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: No timeline and no funding means one thing: The Liberals have no plan to deliver two-way, all-day GO earlier than 2030. The cities of Kitchener, Waterloo and Guelph have been clear. They have called for all-day, two-way GO train service on the Kitchener line. But rather than listening, rather than investing and rather than creating 40,000 jobs, the Liberals are stalling and wasting even more time, just like the last Premier. This Liberal Premier will say anything to distract from their record of delivering nothing.

To the Premier, will she admit she has no idea when two-way, all-day GO will reach Kitchener—Waterloo?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order. Be seated, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just finished giving the member opposite a date. I just finished saying that by the

end of 2016, those trains are going to be in place. The member opposite knows full well that we are acting on our commitment, as we have in the last few years. We've invested \$19.3 billion in public transit.

What is outrageous is that a member of the NDP—who has denigrated any plan we've had for transit, who has given us no support in terms of raising revenue and who has no plan for transit—would stand up when she knows full well that we're bringing full-day, two-way transit to Kitchener–Waterloo, and all she would do is criticize instead of bringing forward a plan that might actually help to move that plan forward.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I find it absolutely fascinating that I hear complaints all the time from all three sides about one side being too loud, and then as soon as they start, the other side gets loud. How about if we all just tone it down?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you don't get the last word; I do.

New question.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Recently—in fact, a few weeks ago—I was at an elementary school in Mississauga East–Cooksville. The name of that school is Metropolitan Andrei, and I was there to attend a parent council meeting.

What I heard from those moms that evening—and they were mostly moms—the hot topic of conversation was actually multiplication tables. What I heard those moms tell me is that they really want their kids to learn creative thinking and problem-solving, but they also want to make sure that their kids are learning their multiplication tables and math drills, the same way many of us in this Legislature did when we were in school.

I promised them that night that I would express their views to the Minister of Education, so I'm really pleased that today I'm able to ask this on their behalf, and for all parents in Mississauga East–Cooksville.

To the Minister of Education: What are we doing to ensure that our kids have the best of both worlds?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for the question. The member is quite right: Ontario's students are performing well in math. In fact, our results are above the OECD average, despite what the official opposition continues to say.

I'm proud of the gains that Ontario students have made, but I do know we can do better. As minister, I've heard from business and community leaders who tell me they are looking for graduates who know their math and who are also critical thinkers and problem-solvers, which is why we are committed to ensuring there is a balanced approach to math instruction between practice and

problem-solving, and not simply a one-dimensional back-to-the-basics approach like the Conservatives are proposing.

In fact, Ontario's curriculum is very consistent with Quebec's. We know that it's important for our students to be able to understand math concepts, know their facts and use them to solve problems.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. In the last few months, the results for Ontario's EQAO assessments, as well as the international assessments from the OECD, have been released, and there's some really great news. It's reassuring to see that overall in Ontario, 71% of students are at the provincial standard, up from 54% when the Tories were in power. So we've done a really good job, and thank you, Minister, for that.

But there's always room for improvement. Can you tell this House what we are doing to further improve math scores in Ontario?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member. She's right: Ontario does have a lot to be proud of when we look at our student achievement, and that's thanks to the great educators we have in our system.

But we do have more work to do on math; we know that. So that's why we're investing \$4 million to create new learning opportunities in math for educators, including workshops in the summer, and incentives for teachers to take additional qualifications courses.

I know the party opposite believes that the way to raise math scores is to give merit pay for teachers who get the best math scores. You know what? We don't believe that will work, because we believe that the way to make kids learn better is to help teachers teach our students to build and apply their math scores. That's why we're investing in teachers and working with the College of Teachers and the faculties of education to improve math pedagogy.

1120

SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the education minister. As your teachers' bargaining bill limps through committee, weighed down by dozens and dozens of hand-crafted union amendments, the Ontario PC caucus has made but one request to get this bill passed. We want you to ensure that sports teams, debate clubs and choir practices are not used as bargaining chips the next time the unions decide to hold them hostage.

The funny thing is, Minister, that you actually agree with us. As president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, you supported that idea. We know this because in a 2001 brief to the government, your report stated, "A comprehensive co-instructional program is an essential part of the educational experience."

At that time, you actually listened to parents and students who told you how important co-instructional activities are to them.

Since the minister has had some time to think about this over the March break, does she agree with her position before or after she became a politician?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Actually, it's an absolutely consistent position. We totally believe that co-instructional activities are very, very important to creating a safe, supportive and nurturing school environment.

We know that when kids participate in activities beyond just curriculum, that helps them to succeed. For many children, it's those extra opportunities that actually present their attachment to school.

If he wants more evidence of my stand on that, if he'd look at all the reports made by the Safe Schools Action Team, which I also chaired, he would find that that is the same position.

What we don't agree with is that mandating these things and trying to legislate will actually solve the problem. Working with partners is what solves the problem, not trying to legislate—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Minister, if you say something is essential, you will do whatever it takes to get the job done. On your government's watch, extracurricular activities were an afterthought, a bargaining chip. Parents and students remember that vividly.

The same February 7, 2001, brief suggests that we "remove co-instructional activities from the realm of selective service withdrawal (work-to-rule)."

Minister, there was a time when you stood with students and parents. I can't imagine what it would be like to work your whole life on behalf of students and to then turn your back the second the unions tell you what to do.

We hear enough empty rhetoric from that party, Mr. Speaker, and students deserve more than that. Will the minister stand by what she believes, stand with parents and students, and safeguard co-instructional activities in Ontario schools? Be the boss, Minister, and do your job.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Liz Sandals: The difference between the member opposite and me is, as he just pointed out, I've been involved in the education system for a very long time—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex will withdraw.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I got it. Relax. I challenge everybody to ratchet it down.

Minister?

Hon. Liz Sandals: What I know, because I was president of the school boards when they were the government, is that they chose to legislate. When they tried to legislate—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton will come to order. The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex will come to order. The member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, yes, you did.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Liz Sandals: We had eight years of chaos, precisely because they insisted that they could solve all the problems of volunteerism by legislating. It didn't work then; it won't work now. Partnership works. Fights don't work.

NURSES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Hundreds of nurses are outside today, urging this government to protect patient care. They are frustrated because more than 1,000 nursing positions have been cut since 2012 and Ontario is falling behind.

Given all that the government knows about the vital role that nurses play across our health care system, why does this government keep laying nurses off?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the question. I think it's an important opportunity to set the record right. We have 20,500 more nurses working in Ontario today than in 2003. Let me repeat that: 20,500 more nurses working now than in 2003. We have 4,000 more nurses working today than we did a year ago.

We believe in the role of nurses. We're expanding the scope of practice. We're investing in nurse practitioners in running clinics and working in very important roles throughout our health care system. I look forward to the supplementary, but the numbers speak for themselves. From the College of Nurses, we have seen an 18.4% increase in the number of nurses: 20,500 more nurses working today than 10 years ago.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The minister also knows that Ontario has the second-lowest registered-nurse-to-person ratio in our entire country. We know that there is a direct link between patient outcomes and registered nurses' workloads, or, said the other way, when you cut nurses, you hurt patients. When will this government stop patting themselves on the back and address the problem that they are creating?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, let me repeat, because maybe—just maybe—the member opposite did not hear the first time: 20,500 more nurses working today than 10 years ago. In the last year, we have added 4,000 more nurses.

Yes, the health care system is undergoing a transformation. There are more nurses working in the community sector. That's a good thing. That's a good thing for patients; it's a good thing for our health care system.

We value tremendously the role that nurses play, and that's why we've continued to invest in more nurses working throughout our health care system.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, you and I have an interest in helping Ontario's vulnerable youth. I'm pleased to acknowledge that this House finally passed Bill 53, which you and I brought forward, and we now can see May 14 proclaimed as Children and Youth in Care Day, a day each year that we can celebrate their accomplishments and, more importantly, raise awareness of the challenges that these youth often face. This is the right thing to do.

Minister, children with communication, developmental and physical disabilities face many challenges. In my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, I've met with many constituents facing these challenges. As a member of the Select Committee on Developmental Services, I heard testimony from many families about their difficulties in accessing services for their children.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can she please inform the House what our government is doing in addressing the concern of these families?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for the question and, as well, congratulate her on the passage of Bill 53 earlier this week. That was great. Having brought it forward the first time and following up on it, I was quite pleased to see that pass, so congratulations to this House for passing that. I'd like to thank her and the Select Committee on Developmental Services on the work that they've done and the interim report that they've just brought forward, as well.

The current services that we provide to children and youth with special needs make a real difference, but we recognize that there is more to do. I know that the committee has heard from parents and families, just as I have as well.

I recently announced the new Ontario Special Needs Strategy. As part of this strategy, we will be introducing a new developmental screen to help identify risks to a child's development as early as possible. We will be hiring service coordinators to make planning for a child's care easier, and we will be integrating the delivery of rehabilitation supports to eliminate service gaps. We know that families have an interest in ensuring that we stay on track with these changes.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you to the minister for her response. I'm pleased to hear that we have brought forward a special needs strategy to make it easier for children and families to access supports.

In my riding, I often hear from families about the difficulty they face accessing services, and I'm pleased to hear that we're taking action.

I'm also impressed by the strength and commitment to caring for their children. I want to make sure that these initiatives help families as effectively as possible. These

initiatives need to include the feedback both from the families as well as the leading experts.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can she also please share with the House how the Special Needs Strategy takes into consideration the advice of families as well as experts in the field?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Our new Special Needs Strategy incorporates the feedback that we have heard and certainly is reflected in the strategy. When I announced the strategy, I was at the York-Simcoe Children's Treatment Network. It really strikes a chord, and you really see the gratitude when you see parents in the audience with tears in their eyes, because they recognize we have listened, and we've brought forward a strong strategy.

So you've heard that we'll be assisting with the navigation. We'll be bringing forward a new developmental screen, hiring service coordinators, making it easier for families to navigate what is now a very complex system. But, as part of this strategy as well, we will be putting in place a committee to assist us with the implementation of this.

We will continue to focus our efforts. We will continue to listen to parents and experts as we implement to ensure that we have all children reaching their opportunities, and helping all children succeed.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is for the Premier. I have to admit it was a bit rich to hear your GO Transit reannouncement yesterday. You seem to have forgotten your government's long list of broken promises on infrastructure projects in Waterloo region, so let's review.

In 2007, you promised you'd build Highway 7; then you didn't. In 2010, you promised you'd build Highway 7; then you didn't. In 2012, you promised you'd build Highway 7, but you still haven't. And let's not forget: In 2010, you promised four eastbound and westbound GO trains between Kitchener and Toronto, but you cut that in half.

Premier, with such a long list of broken promises on infrastructure projects in Waterloo region, why should anyone in my community believe a word you now say?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It was my pleasure to be in Kitchener—Waterloo yesterday, and to talk to the Cambridge and Kitchener—Waterloo chambers of commerce and to be able to talk about the investment that we are going to make in full-day, two-way GO service, Mr. Speaker. It was interesting, because there were business leaders and local politicians in the room. They are all very pleased that we are bringing this forward in our budget. They are very, very happy that this is what's happening.

I know that the member opposite knows—he might just have forgotten, but I think he knows—that there is

property being purchased along the corridor to deal with the Highway 7 expansion. I'm sure he just forgot that, but he knows that we're delivering on that commitment as well.

So we brought the train to Kitchener–Waterloo. We're going to be bringing full-day, two-way GO service. We're going to be building the expansion of Highway 7. All of those promises have been made, and they're being implemented.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the Premier: Let's review your GO Transit reannouncement from yesterday. You gave no price tag, you gave no specifics and you gave no time frame, yet you still want residents in Waterloo region to believe you.

Premier, you are the reason Kitchener doesn't already have full two-way GO service.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Harris: No. Listen: In 2010, you were the transportation minister. You cancelled the project. Now, nearly four years later, you claim you want to undo your broken promise, but only after allowing another two years to pass.

Premier, do you really think it's fair to coerce the residents of Waterloo region into voting for you by promising the same GO Transit commitment that you cancelled nearly four years ago?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I remember very clearly with the Minister of Government Services when we announced the GO train service to Kitchener–Waterloo. I remember very clearly the enthusiasm for that.

I know that, as I said, the business community and the elected officials yesterday were very pleased that by the end of 2016, Metrolinx expects to add four additional trains, two in the morning and two in the afternoon, to serve the Kitchener station, and that that is a concrete move forward to implementing full-day, two-way GO.

Since 2003, this government has invested \$19.3 billion in public transit, \$9.1 billion in GO Transit. Under the previous Conservative government, between 1999 and 2003, there was virtually no money invested in GO Transit. There was no expansion of service.

The fact is, we are listening to the concerns of people in this province. We know that integrated transportation systems are what is needed, and we are delivering those and we will continue to do that.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. The people of Hamilton are increasingly alarmed about the Ministry of Transportation's proposal to close portions of the Burlington Skyway this summer. Ministry staff suggest that the closures will take place overnight on 18

weekends and affect the Toronto-bound traffic. The proposal suggests that closures will take place between this spring and the fall of 2016.

Has the ministry been told that the province is hosting the Pan/Parapan Am Games next summer and that the venues include Welland and Hamilton?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the member's comments in regard to the Pan/Parapan American Games, something that's going to be a tremendous opportunity for tourism, attractions and, more importantly, infrastructure spending.

I understand the concerns you have in regard to transit and getting people around the greater Golden Horseshoe. It's a valid concern. It's one that we're addressing here with our Minister of Transportation as well as our minister responsible for security, ensuring that people in the province are safe and ensuring that we move people more appropriately and more effectively. That will require some amendments and some changes to some of the lanes and some of the closures in the meantime.

But it's going to be an investment in our future, and Ontarians are going to be proud of their athletes performing in the Pan Am Games. They're going to be proud that they're going to have venues, community centres, auditoriums and stadiums like never before. That is the legacy that's going to be left to this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I don't know what that has got to do with the bridge. But anyways, not only will these closures have a significant impact on the citizens of greater Hamilton; they will negatively impact our tourism partners as well.

With concerns raised by city councillors in Hamilton about the rerouted traffic impact on our beach neighbourhood, which has an 80-year-old lift bridge, during the nighttime closures, there is also concern about the impact of the daytime closures, should winds reach 85 kilometres an hour at times on that bridge.

I don't recall any consultation with me or my staff or the city of Hamilton about this proposal. I'm gravely concerned about the impact on our citizens, our tourists and our Pan/Parapan Am Games participants.

Will the Premier step back from this proposal until full consultation takes place and real consideration is given to the impact on Hamiltonians, tourism, the Pan/Parapan Am Games and our Hamilton council?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Actually, I attended a number of the announcements in Hamilton when we introduced the refurbishing and the new stadium that's going to be going to Hamilton. The mayor was there and the council was there, and the member opposite was there as well, celebrating the infusion of capital and investment into Hamilton for the benefit of the people of Hamilton and for the people of Ontario.

Also, the council and the mayor, as of last week, have been consulted. They're looking at ways to alleviate traffic woes during that construction. Those consultations are being had.

I say to the member opposite, if he wishes to involve himself, by all means; you have friends in council. Be part of the solution. Enable us to make this happen. Working together, we can accomplish a lot.

I know you. I know you want to be part of this. I know you—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, yes, you do.

Stop the clock. That is a perfect example of why you address the Chair, and it's why I would ask you, if you ask the question, to listen carefully to the answer instead of heckling.

I would ask and remind us all—except for the member who wants to give me some coaching; I don't want it right now—if you would all just simply follow the rules, everything would be fine. Thank you.

1140

FARM SAFETY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Minister, my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham is, as you know, partly rural and home to many farms. I know the farmers in my riding are very concerned about safe farming practices and workplace safety, so I was pleased to hear that the Canadian Federation of Agriculture named last week as Canadian Agricultural Safety Week. Although it is always good to see events that illustrate the importance of farm safety, we need to be sure that safe practice is actually used. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is the Ministry of Agriculture and Food doing to promote a safe workplace environment on the farm?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for her question. I know she is always concerned about these safety issues. I want to assure her that our government is committed to ensuring that all farm workers and producers are protected, that their health and safety is protected. In fact, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food has been working with Workplace Safety and Prevention Services for over 15 years. Our goal is to reduce the occurrence of workplace injuries and illness on Ontario farms, horticulture and landscape operations.

Canadian Agricultural Safety Week actually gives us an opportunity to reflect on the work we've done to improve our safety record, and working with rural affairs, there are a number of ongoing safety initiatives. We have agriculture safety days that focus on safety education and training for children and families. My ministry is pleased to work with Workplace Safety and Prevention Services with a transfer payment of \$120,000 a year. That's specifically intended to ensure that its programs and information are available to all families and to all farmers across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Minister, for that response. It's good to hear that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food is working so closely with Workplace Safety and Prevention Services and the Ministry of Rural Affairs to further ongoing farm safety initiatives. As we all know, agricultural work is often hazardous and can lead to serious workplace injuries. People in my riding work in the agricultural sector and face these inherent risks each and every day. I understand that in 2006 our government extended the Occupational Health and Safety Act to include farming operations for the first time ever. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you tell my constituents what else our government is doing to protect the health and safety of Ontarians who work in our agricultural sector?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for the very timely question. We value the hard work that our farmers do every single day to make sure that local food comes to our table. The Ministry of Labour has 200 trained inspectors with expertise on issues inherent to health and safety. The Ministry of Labour will continue to conduct both reactive and proactive visits to farms across the province. To address and continuously improve farm safety in Ontario, the ministry works with the farming technical advisory committee. Among many targeted initiatives, the ministry has produced eight guidelines to help employers in the farming industry. Further, the ministry has included farming operations as a targeted sector for several blitzes, most recently in 2003, in our vulnerable, new and young worker blitz. We'll continue to value the work our farmers do and ensure that farming is safe in Ontario.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Premier. Back in February, the Minister of Transportation addressed the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce about transit in the Hamilton region. Despite his well-documented preference for LRTs in Toronto, his comments that day were very subdued on whether your government would force LRTs on Hamilton. As you may know, two of your Liberal candidates in the area, Ivan Luksic and Javid Mirza, are strongly opposed to LRTs in Hamilton. I find it very interesting that the minister will take a stance on LRTs by any means in Toronto but has mixed opinions on them in Hamilton. My question is, Premier: Who is dictating the transit policy there, the Minister of Transportation or the candidates whose seats you want to win in the next election?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the question is, are we going to continue to invest in transit in the GTHA and beyond, are we going to invest in integrated transportation plans, yes, we are going to do that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Oxford will come to order; Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —which, I would just remark, stands in stark contrast to what the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Leeds—Grenville, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —opposition party has put forward, which is no plan to invest in transit, no support for developing integrated transportation plans.

On the issue of the particular modes of public transit, municipality by municipality, there are local discussions; there is no doubt about that. There are local discussions in Toronto, in Kitchener—Waterloo, in Ottawa and in Hamilton, and municipalities need to work to determine what is going to be the best mode for their own communities. That's why we work in partnership with municipalities as we make those investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Premier. Premier, you've just said it, and you and your minister both talk about respecting local decision-making, yet your government railroads municipalities at every turn.

I want to draw your attention to a letter I wrote to the minister on March 6 about the Niagara-GTA corridor. The mid-peninsula highway would bring thousands of jobs, alleviate congestion and enhance cross-border trade. Local bodies, including the municipality of Niagara, the city of Hamilton, the Burlington Chamber of Commerce and many more who represent the local interests you've been talking about, all strongly support this project. Yet the Minister of Transportation addressed the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce and he dismissed the project as ridiculous.

Premier, I have to ask, do you support your minister, and if so, why do you think local decision-making is important for LRTs in Hamilton, yet unimportant for projects that would unleash thousands of jobs in the Hamilton-Niagara region?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm happy to have a conversation about the mid-pen highway. There have been many, many opinions expressed. The ministry has recommended building a new highway connecting 406 near Welland to the QEW near Fort Erie. That recommendation has been done. The member opposite knows that there has been a more contentious discussion about a larger project.

But I do believe that local input is important. I also believe that making sure we make these investments is important. It's very interesting that the party that is advocating cutting and slashing and not investing in the province, that is talking about not investing in infrastructure and not investing in people and not investing in communities, all of a sudden has members who are asking questions about making investments that would cost millions of dollars.

The fact is, we are going to make those investments. We are going to work with communities, and that stands in stark contrast—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. Madam Premier, each year for the past 26 years, hundreds of thousands of music lovers have descended on the Beach at Queen Street East for what has been described as “one of the 10 best jazz festivals in the world.” The Beaches Jazz Festival has grown bigger and better every year, and hundreds of local volunteers work with the director, Lido Chilleli, and his team to create this phenomenal event. Last year, 500,000 people attended.

For the past seven years, the festival has received funding from the Ministry of Tourism's Celebrate Ontario program. Can the Premier explain why this ministry and her minister have rejected their grant application for 2014?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would be happy to have a discussion with the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. I don't have the details on this particular investment. But what I do know is that there are hundreds of events and festivals across the province that receive funding. Each year, the ministry looks at the applications and those decisions are made. I'm happy to get back to the member on the specifics of this particular issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: It is true there are hundreds of applications made, but this is the largest jazz festival, by far, in the whole province. This festival generates \$65 million into the Toronto economy and over \$30 million of that right in the Beach area. The entertainment is free of charge. Classes and workshops are held for aspiring young musicians, and world-class entertainers appear on our doorstep that everyone can enjoy.

Speaker, I don't think the ministry or the Minister of Tourism has properly assessed this application. Will the Premier intervene?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As the Premier indicated, she will certainly look into this and get back to the member opposite, but it gives us the opportunity to talk about this highly competitive program, Celebrate Ontario, with the amazing success that it has.

I want to talk about its success in job creation: 22,000 jobs annually, each year. The funding the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport provides through Celebrate Ontario generates more than 22,000 jobs.

I don't know what the member opposite wants me to say. We're going to get back to him and look into it. Unfortunately, the minister responsible isn't here to respond directly. But this is an important program. Certainly in the Beaches it's a very important program that we have supported for a number of years. We will certainly get back to him on this issue.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Community and Social

Services. The members of this House all heard the heartfelt apology from the Premier to the former residents of the Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern regional centres when it was delivered in the Legislature on December 9, 2013.

Observers, myself included, applauded the Premier for her sincerity. We also commended the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the third party for their impactful apologies as well. However, since then, we've not heard an update on other important aspects of this settlement for the former residents. One such requirement was that residents be provided access to their own case files should they desire them.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Would you inform this House as to what is the status of this key settlement?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd be delighted to respond to the excellent question. I'm pleased to share with the House that, in order to make it easier for former residents, the government is providing one-window access through the ministry's freedom-of-information unit.

Through this process, no requester of information is required to pay any fee. We brought in extra staff. We've already reviewed over 70,000 pages of documents.

To date, there have been 397 requests for personal records, and all have been met within the timeline prescribed, as per the agreement.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Labour on a point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I just want to correct my record. In my response to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, I said that our most recent blitz for vulnerable, new and young workers was in 2003. What I meant to say is that it was in 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1152 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In the east members' gallery, I'd like to introduce Allan O'Dette, the president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and a resident of the great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to introduce a number of doctors and community volunteers who are here for Sickle Cell and Thalassemia Awareness Day: Lanre Tunji-Ajayi, Doreen Alexander, Helen Ziavras, Dr. Isaac Odame from SickKids, Dr. Rob Klaassen from Ottawa's children's hospital, Dr. Richard Ward from Toronto General Hospital, Dr. Jacob Pendergast from Toronto General Hospital, and Dr. Madeleine Verhovsek from St. Joe's hospital in Hamilton. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: The residents in my riding of Durham opposed to the Clarington transformer project are being ignored by the Minister of the Environment. The residents formed the Enniskillen Environmental Association and contracted a world-renowned hydrogeologist, Dr. John Cherry, of the G360 group at Guelph university. The Enniskillen Environmental Association and Dr. John Cherry have brought forward substantial research indicating faults in Hydro One's class environmental assessment.

Minister Bradley and I met yesterday, and I shared with him and spoke with him for some time and gave him some correspondence that perhaps his staff did not provide to him. I'm asking the minister to respond to them directly.

Recently, the municipality of Clarington approved up to \$25,000 in funding for research on Hydro One's transformer site, because the municipality, along with Dr. Cherry, does not believe that sufficient scientific study has been conducted.

Now the region of Durham is requesting that the minister meet with the Enniskillen Environmental Association and Dr. Cherry to listen to their concerns, understand the research, and explain the reason for the approval of the project.

Minister, please do not avoid this issue. For far too long, I have been meeting with you and asking and requesting politely that you meet with the Enniskillen Environmental Association and Dr. Cherry before you allow the transfer station project to commence construction. It's important to establish the trust in protecting the environment.

LAURA HAMILTON

Ms. Catherine Fife: Every now and then, we have a unique opportunity in this House to stand up and share a personal story.

One of the positive things about winning the Kitchener–Waterloo by-election is that I've actually had an opportunity to spend more time with my own sister, who lives in Toronto. Over the last couple of years, Julie, my sister, has shared the remarkable and courageous journey of a young woman, her friend Laura Hamilton.

Laura recently succumbed to cancer, at the age of 34, but she didn't go out without a fight. Laura Hamilton was a superstar. She dedicated her life to children and youth through her passionate work at the YMCA of Western Ontario and through the three inspiring children's books she wrote under the guise of a stuffed lion named Roary, the proceeds of which go to support camp experience for children.

Laura touched the hearts of the people in her community and beyond. Her strength was put to the test many times in her young life, yet Laura always found the silver

lining. She continued to amaze everyone with the positivity and gratitude that she maintained throughout all the obstacles she had to face.

When her final test proved to be more than any lion could overcome, she persevered by staying true to her humour and love of life. By drawing strength from the love within her and around her, she overcame the boundaries set up by those who did not know her, including the doctors who unfairly predicted a quick death. Throughout her battle with cancer, Laura was fierce and courageous, but most importantly, she always stayed true to herself.

My sincere condolences go out to the family and friends of Laura. Thank you for sharing her with the world.

SICKLE CELL AND THALASSEMIA AWARENESS DAY

Mr. Mike Colle: As you know, Mr. Speaker, today is Sickle Cell and Thalassemia Awareness Day at Queen's Park. We've had doctors from all across the province here today and we've had volunteer advocates from Thalassemia Canada and the Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario. The volunteers are all here today to remind us of this silent—secret, almost—disease and blood disorder which affects hundreds of thousands of our neighbours, and not enough is being done to help them. They suffer in silence. They go through horrendous pain because of the fact that we don't pay enough attention to this horrific disease that affects, again, many of our neighbours across Ontario. They're here today to let us all know that it's about time we paid more attention to helping people who suffer from this debilitating disease that makes life unbearable.

They've met with the Minister of Health today. They are meeting with many MPPs, who found the time, because they can no longer stand by and see their loved ones suffer day after day without proper attention being given to them.

We have great work being done by Dr. Pendergast, from down the street at Toronto General Hospital, and Dr. Ward, but we need more of these good doctors, like Dr. Odame. So let's wake up and take this disease on, head first.

BUSINESS CLIMATE

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Last Wednesday, I hosted a business round table in St. Marys. I would like to thank the members from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Huron-Bruce for attending and speaking to local businesses and community leaders in Perth-Wellington. The turnout was impressive, with around 50 participants sharing their thoughts. We discussed the strong work ethic, entrepreneurial spirit and support from the local business organizations we have in our area.

Business leaders were frustrated, however, with certain provincial policies and red tape. We heard that energy costs are a primary concern for many businesses.

They cannot afford their hydro bills. Participants spoke about the burden of red tape. They are tired of onerous legislation and the government's micromanaging. Concerns were raised regarding the shortage of workers in the skilled trades, with participants citing the College of Trades and its cost as obstacles for skilled trades workers.

As our area is underserved in regard to public transportation, regional transportation challenges were a topic of discussion. We need a better way to connect our local communities. It's now too difficult for many job seekers and employees to work outside their hometown.

It was noted that one of our greatest exports is our youth. Opportunities need to be created to connect business with youth and attract them to, and keep them in, our rural communities.

Overall, we had a very informative and open discussion, and I am pleased to share the feedback in the House today.

NIAGARA PENINSULA CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Ms. Cindy Forster: I stand here today in the Legislature to echo concerns of city and regional councillors, conservationists and residents of Niagara, as well as past and present members of the board of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, over recent actions of the NPCA.

Since January 2012, the NPCA has fired 20% of their staff, including many long-serving senior positions. Additionally, other major policy changes are taking place in a recent strategic plan that outlines their goals for the next four years. Concerns have been raised about the language in the plan and the shift towards the potential sale of NPCA land. In the plan, one of the key objectives is the "streamlined, efficient delivery of development approvals process," which clearly defines development as a priority. Further, I understand that a new committee has been struck to deal specifically with property acquisition and disposal, being comprised of many from the development community.

Under the mandate of the conservation authorities of Ontario, the NPCA is here to ensure that our rivers, lakes, and streams are properly safeguarded, managed and restored; to protect, manage and restore woodlands, wetlands and natural habitat; and to develop and maintain programs that will protect life and property from natural hazards.

Many are worried that the NPCA is diverting away from their mandate, and I stand here to raise awareness of this issue to ensure that the Minister of Natural Resources exercises his ministerial authority to ensure that the NPCA is operating as per their mandate and in accordance with ministry regulations and the Ontario Conservation Authority regulations.

TAMIL HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Soo Wong: I would like to congratulate all members of the House for passing the bill proclaiming

January as Tamil Heritage Month. It was nice to see that celebrating the cultural diversity of our province can bring us all together.

1510

We can also be very proud of Ontario's multiculturalism. Tamil Canadians represent a growing and dynamic population in Ontario, with approximately 300,000 living in the GTA alone.

We are fortunate to have a strong Tamil population in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, as they make many important contributions to our community's social, economic, political and cultural well-being. People like Vijayakumara Kurukkal, the priest at the Sri Varasithi Vinaayagar Hindu Temple in Scarborough–Agincourt, make a difference. There are also community leaders like Kulaveerasingham Sellathurai, Stan Muthulingam, Dr. Pon Sivaji, Krishan Suntharalingam and Ganesan Sugumar that have helped make Scarborough so vibrant. There are also youth like Kirusaan and Rukshan, who are active volunteers with me and other members of the community.

January is an important month for Tamil Canadians. The Tamil harvest festival, Thai Pongal, as well as other Tamil artistic and cultural events all take place in January.

Heritage months are opportunities to improve cultural understanding through education and awareness. This is an important part of building an accepting and tolerant society that nurtures diversity.

I'm proud that this House passed the bill and proclaimed January as Tamil Heritage Month.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

COLLÈGES AGRICOLES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my privilege and honour to rise today on behalf of those in eastern Ontario, particularly in Kemptville and Alfred, who oppose the closure of those two agricultural colleges. I'm requesting that the Liberal government reverse those closures, and I stand committed with my Progressive Conservative caucus colleagues from the eastern Ontario region in offering this suggestion to the Liberal government: Give us the same courtesy that they gave New Liskeard and allow a two-year moratorium.

Donnez-nous la même courtoisie que vous avez donnée à New Liskeard : permettre un moratoire de deux ans. With a two-year moratorium, Kemptville and Alfred can allow for new students. Avec un moratoire de deux ans, Kemptville et Alfred peuvent se permettre d'inscrire de nouveaux étudiants. Local communities in Kemptville and Alfred can work on new governance structures. Les communautés locales à Kemptville et Alfred peuvent travailler sur de nouvelles structures de gouvernance. And they can fight to retain their local assets. Et ils peuvent se battre pour conserver leurs actifs locaux.

Speaker, we believe that this is the best solution, and I urge the Liberals to adopt it. I urge them to support those

from Russell, Sarsfield, Vars and Casselman who have signed my petition asking for this two-year moratorium. Ceci est la meilleure solution. Donc, j'invite les libéraux à l'adopter.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Mr. Bob Delaney: As the weather finally, inexorably begins to warm up, we heat-deprived Canadians turn our thoughts to getting away or planning for the summer. I have some reminders for Ontarians planning to either travel outside Canada or to receive visitors from outside Canada.

If you are travelling, especially to the United States, even for just a day, make sure you have third-party health insurance. Check your homeowner's policy or your premium credit cards. Check your employer's coverage to see if you're covered for illness and health care if and when you travel outside Canada. If not, visit your bank, see the Canadian Automobile Association or call your insurance carrier about travel insurance. It's cheap, and not having it can bring financial ruin to your family if someone falls sick or is injured while travelling.

Similarly, be sure all your visitors from outside Canada are covered by travellers' health insurance issued in their country of origin, and remain covered from the day they leave their home until the day they disembark back home after their trip. Foreign nationals, even if they are related to you, are not covered by OHIP while visiting Ontario.

This is advice that Ontarians can't afford to ignore. Enjoy the warm weather, and have a good trip wherever it is you choose to go.

ELMIRA MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm pleased to rise today to speak on behalf of the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival and announce that their volunteer appreciation night is taking place this Friday at Lions Hall in Elmira.

As many know, the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival is the largest of its kind, and this year they are celebrating their 50th anniversary. Many new events are planned, including a magic show, food truck festival and cooking demos from celebrity chefs.

Going to Elmira is a tradition for my family, as we always kick off springtime with a trip to the festival. We don't hesitate to try all the exciting foods, activities and events featured in Elmira during the first Saturday in April.

Of course, this event wouldn't continue to thrive without the tireless work of the more than 2,000 dedicated volunteers who make this event possible each and every year. They do everything from directing traffic to providing sugar-bush tours to running games and activities for thousands of excited children. Their selfless efforts are the reason people from my community and across the world travel to the township of Woolwich for this important festival. So I would like to take this time to thank all

the dedicated volunteers of the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival for making it 50 great years.

As a final note, I am issuing a warning to the rival Mother Flippers team in the pancake flipping relay contest. I, in fact, just dusted off a shelf in my office and look forward to putting that first-place trophy there after the competition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I hope everyone will come out to Elmira for this year's 50th Elmira Maple Syrup Festival.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ah, pancakes. I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PENSION BENEFITS AMENDMENT ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE

Mr. Paul Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 174, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act /
Projet de loi 174, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de
retraite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of
the House the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a
short statement.

Mr. Paul Miller: This bill amends the Pension
Benefits Act to raise the amount guaranteed by the
Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund from \$1,000 to \$2,500
per month.

SICKLE CELL AND THALASSEMIA CARE ONTARIO ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR TRAITEMENT DES AFFECTIONS DRÉPANOCYTAIRES ET DES THALASSÉMIES ONTARIO

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 175, An Act to establish Sickle Cell and
Thalassemia Care Ontario and to proclaim Sickle Cell
and Thalassemia Awareness Day / Projet de loi 175, Loi
créant Traitement des affections drépanocytaires et des
thalassémies Ontario et proclamant la Journée de
sensibilisation aux affections drépanocytaires et aux
thalassémies.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of
the House the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a
short statement.

Mr. Mike Colle: If this bill is passed, it would create
a comprehensive and coordinated approach to treating all
people in Ontario, in every part of Ontario, equally if

they are afflicted with thalassemia or sickle cell. It would
also, if passed, proclaim June 19 each year as Sickle Cell
and Thalassemia Awareness Day in Ontario.

1520

BETTER BUSINESS CLIMATE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 VISANT À INSTAURER UN CLIMAT PLUS PROPICE AUX AFFAIRES

Mr. Hoskins moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 176, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction
Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and
Growth Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 176, Loi édictant la Loi
de 2014 sur l'obligation de faire rapport concernant la
réduction des fardeaux administratifs et la Loi de 2014
sur les partenariats pour la création d'emplois et la
croissance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of
the House that the motion carry?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

The ayes have it. Carried.

First reading agreed to.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I didn't think you would—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, I hear every-
thing you say.

The member for a short statement.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I will make my statement during
ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LA FRANCOPHONIE

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je me lève cet après-
midi avec fierté pour informer l'Assemblée législative
que nous allons célébrer demain la Journée internationale
de la Francophonie. Chaque année, les 77 états et
gouvernements qui composent l'Organisation internationale
de la Francophonie à travers le monde célèbrent la langue
française et les liens de solidarité qui les unissent.

Que ce soit comme membres ou observateurs, ces
états ont tous en commun le profond désir de la
promotion et de la préservation de la langue française au
sein de leurs institutions publiques et communautaires.
Pour ces états et gouvernements, la langue française est
un outil stratégique qui permet le développement
culturel, social et économique de leurs états.

I am proud of my government for the way it demon-
strates, day in, day out, that it is fully committed to this
mission by helping the Franco-Ontarian community thrive.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my fellow MPPs and ministers for their support in ensuring our province's visibility in this illustrious international organization.

Le rayonnement de l'Ontario au sein de la Francophonie est de plus en plus marquant et c'est ce qu'on va célébrer demain partout dans la province. Le thème choisi pour les festivités cette année est « Place au talent ».

Chers collègues députés, l'Ontario ne pourrait mieux se positionner lorsqu'il s'agit du talent des francophones. Dans tous les secteurs d'activités, la communauté franco-ontarienne se distingue. Nos garderies et nos écoles françaises sont des institutions reconnues qui se taillent une place de choix dans le système d'éducation de l'Ontario et du monde entier, avec des résultats enviables.

Nos jeunes francophones possèdent des talents extraordinaires dans la musique, le théâtre, la danse, les nouveaux médias et les sports. Les personnes âgées francophones sont très actives et impliquées dans la société, ce qui en fait des personnes-ressources inestimables.

Et l'Ontario se place parmi les sociétés les plus accueillantes du monde entier envers ses immigrants. Nous avons toutes les raisons d'en être fiers.

Moreover, our immigration bill which is now in second reading includes steps to increase francophone immigration, and I am especially happy about this. In maintaining their francophone identity, newcomers strengthen the cultural diversity of Ontario, a province that values inclusion and difference.

Dear colleagues, our province acted decades ago on the belief that its francophone community would contribute to making Ontario stronger both socially and economically, and the years have proven that we were right. Francophones have answered the call and have taken charge of their future.

Comme le dit si bien le Secrétaire général de la Francophonie, Abdou Diouf, dans son message pour les célébrations, « La Francophonie, c'est avoir l'audace de penser que nous avons, ensemble, une emprise sur notre destinée commune. » Cette audace, je la constate ici chez les députés qui siègent à l'Assemblée législative et qui n'hésitent pas à prendre position pour les francophones.

Thanks to you, ladies and gentlemen, the bill making the French Language Services Commissioner an independent officer of the Legislature was adopted unanimously last December. Since January 1, the commissioner and his office report directly to the Legislative Assembly, a bold move that solidifies the commissioner's significant role in dealing with government departments and agencies.

Je vois cette même audace chez les jeunes qui ont milité avec tant de passion en faveur de l'éducation postsecondaire en français. Je la sens chez les parents qui continuent massivement à inscrire leurs enfants dans les écoles de langue française.

Oui, c'est ça l'audace qui caractérise les francophones en Ontario. C'est croire que la langue française est un gage de succès, d'avancement et de réussite dans ses études, dans son travail ou dans ses relations sociales.

L'Ontario a la chance unique d'influencer les débats qui touchent à la langue et la culture, grâce à la belle crédibilité que nous avons acquise au cours de ces années. Nous avons ce pouvoir parce que nous adhérons aux mêmes valeurs d'égalité et de justice que nous voulons voir mises en place ailleurs dans le monde.

On dit souvent que la plus grande justice consiste à donner la chance égale de réussir à tous. L'Ontario a créé une société juste et égalitaire qui fait « place au talent » de tous ses citoyens francophones et francophiles. C'est ce que nous célébrons cette semaine.

I invite members of the Legislature to join in the celebrations of French language and culture that will be taking place in their constituencies throughout the week. I would also remind members that in 2015 we will be commemorating the 400th anniversary of French presence in Ontario.

Pour ce faire, mon gouvernement a établi un plan qui permettra de mettre en lumière l'apport important des Franco-Ontariens à l'histoire, la culture et l'économie de la province. J'invite tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes à y participer, car ce sera une commémoration inclusive et ouverte sur le monde, une commémoration qui rendra hommage à l'histoire, mais qui projetera aussi la francophonie ontarienne dans l'avenir.

Bonnes célébrations et longue vie à la Francophonie.

BUSINESS CLIMATE

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Our government's economic plan to create jobs and grow the economy is focused on Ontario's greatest strengths: our people and our strategic partnerships. Today's proposed legislation is about those partnerships. It's about how we can work together with business and other partners to grow the economy, create more jobs and strengthen our business climate.

What does that mean? It means providing faster, smarter and more streamlined government services to businesses, and it means reducing the burden of regulatory, administrative and compliance activities. It's about finding a balance between regulations that are essential to protect the health and safety of our people, and those that are unnecessary burdens for business. Burdens are defined as costs such as time, money and resources that are imposed by regulatory, administrative and compliance rules. They can hinder business's productivity, innovation and overall economic growth.

We are committed to reducing unnecessary burdens on an ongoing basis, and making Ontario one of the few places in the world that measures and reports on the resulting time and financial savings to businesses. Not only does that help our businesses, especially by saving them time and money, but it makes Ontario a more attractive place to invest in the global economy.

We're pleased to be recognized as a Canadian leader in the reduction of unnecessary regulatory requirements by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. When we announced our intent to introduce this proposed legislation, the Canadian Federation of Independent

ent Business applauded the changes. They said that Ontario will be joining “the best in class in regulatory reform.”

Since 2008, our Open for Business initiative to modernize government has eliminated 80,000 burdens, which represent 17% of all regulatory requirements, and we are making further improvements that will save businesses \$100 million over the next three years.

1530

Under the improved strategy, we will not only continue to identify unnecessary burdens, but we'll reduce and eliminate them, saving businesses even more time and money.

Today, we're introducing legislation that, if passed, would require our government to deliver an annual report highlighting burden-reduction initiatives that make a significant and measurable difference.

I'm proud of the work we are doing in collaboration with our business leaders and other stakeholders to help position Ontario as a global leader in reducing barriers to business.

The second kind of partnership—which is no less important, Mr. Speaker—that I want to talk about today is another perfect illustration of a partnership in action, a partnership that makes our province and its regions more competitive and that helps create jobs.

There are few better examples of effective partnerships than strong regional economic clusters. A cluster is defined as a specific geographic concentration of businesses, large and small, along with the institutions that support them. Think of the financial services cluster here in Toronto. It extends from banks to the stock exchange to accounting firms of all sizes, investors, business schools, pension plans and financial regulators.

Together, as the Toronto Region Board of Trade puts it, they collaborate to compete, and they have propelled Toronto to among the top financial hubs in the world, something Ontario is extremely proud to be part of.

The high-tech cluster in Waterloo is another example. It includes large firms like BlackBerry. It includes fast-growing firms like Open Text and Desire2Learn. It also includes offices of firms based elsewhere, like Google, Oracle and, recently, mobile payments company Square.

They are attracted there because of the pool of talent—and the concentration of firms attracts even more talent. That technology cluster supports the development of new, innovative start-ups that drive the industry forward. There's a strong partnership between post-secondary institutions like the University of Waterloo to keep that talent stream flowing. And a not-for-profit organization, Communitech, has been at the centre of building this cluster and making Ontario a global powerhouse in the tech sector.

Today's legislation, if passed, will bring that model to regions right across Ontario in a wide variety of sectors, and this legislation, if passed, would provide our government with a new tool to build partnerships with industry, academia, labour and all levels of government to identify and build up emerging clusters and to strengthen existing ones.

It would help us to formalize a process to work in partnership—always in partnership, because that's where clusters truly thrive—to develop strategic cluster plans, including established goals and coordinated actions to support the development of a specific cluster. Mandatory reviews of the plans would be required every five years to evaluate progress and ensure that these plans remain aligned with changing industry and economic trends.

So, whether it's reducing burdens to help improve our business climate and save businesses time and money or strengthening our regional economic clusters across the province, our government's economic plan will continue to get results and will continue to create jobs for today and tomorrow. How? By focusing on our greatest strengths: our people, and, as we're seeing today, our partnerships.

Mr. Speaker, before I conclude, I want to acknowledge the presence—and their hard work in helping us develop this legislation—in the gallery of Juan Gomez, from the Toronto Region Board of Trade, and Allan O'Dette, from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

DIETITIANS DAY

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Today is the fifth anniversary of National Dietitians Day, and it's an opportunity to recognize and thank Ontario's dietitians, who use their specialized knowledge in food and nutrition to improve our health.

Every year, the Dietitians of Canada and the thousands of dietitians working here in Ontario help promote healthy eating by celebrating Nutrition Month in March. This year, Nutrition Month is focusing on promoting healthy cooking skills by helping families prepare healthy, delicious meals that they can enjoy eating together. Registered dietitians across Ontario are organizing activities, including healthy cooking events, to help Ontarians create delicious and healthy meal choices.

The Dietitians of Canada even have a new app called Cookspiration, available at cookspiration.com, that encourages people to cook for themselves, by offering recipe options to suit different tastes, all with nutrition in mind.

Having the knowledge and skills to prepare meals at home is linked to a healthier diet, and that's important to maintain overall health. For children, helping to prepare meals sets them on the right path to making healthier food choices as they grow.

Any time we prepare food in our own homes, consume ready-to-eat foods or eat out in restaurants, we need the right information to make healthier food choices. That's why, last month, it was my pleasure to introduce new legislation, the Making Healthier Choices Act, which will, if passed, require restaurant chains, convenience stores, grocery stores and other food service establishments with 20 or more locations to post the number of calories in food and beverage items, including alcohol. This proposed legislation fulfills a commitment I made last October and takes further action on the first pillar of

our government's action plan for health care, keeping Ontario healthy.

With this legislation, we're taking another step to improve children's health by tackling the growing problem of childhood obesity. To get the best possible advice on how to achieve better health for our children, we appointed the Healthy Kids Panel. The expert panel heard from many parents who said that their lives are busier than ever, they're eating out more often and they need more help to make the healthy choice for their kids the easy choice every time.

One of the members of this panel was Phyllis Tanaka, a vice-president with Food and Consumer Products of Canada and a registered dietitian. I want to say thank you to Phyllis and to all of the panel members for their advice. They delivered an excellent report.

The Making Healthier Choices Act is the latest in a series of steps we've taken to implement the Healthy Kids Panel recommendations, and I would like to thank Ontario's dietitians for their support of our proposed legislation.

Registered dietitians work in many settings in Ontario. They bring evidence-based information about nutrition and food to consumers, clients and patients. Dietitians are members of health care teams who collaborate with other health care professionals, including doctors, nurses, pharmacists and social workers. Together, they manage nutrition for health promotion, disease prevention, and the treatment of acute and chronic diseases.

As regulated health professionals, the public can have confidence that registered dietitians have the training and skills to provide safe, ethical and competent care.

Dietitians also play a critical role in keeping people of all ages healthier and helping them avoid chronic conditions like diabetes. They translate the complex science of nutrition into practical solutions for healthy eating and disease prevention.

Dietitians can create personalized meal plans to improve weight and help control blood sugar to prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes. Their training also gives them the expertise to help pregnant moms, people seeking to control their blood pressure and those battling eating disorders, among others.

By preventing and managing chronic disease and promoting recovery, dietitians are also a cost-effective investment in the health care system.

I encourage all Ontarians looking for advice on healthier food choices to call or visit EatRight Ontario. EatRight Ontario is a great source of information, where you can ask nutrition-related questions and receive feedback by phone or email from a registered dietitian. Their website, eatrightontario.ca, has some great articles on food and nutrition, meal planning advice, healthy eating tips and recipes. You can even sign up to receive a newsletter on a monthly basis. EatRight Ontario is just one of the ways that dietitians are helping Ontarians to make healthier choices.

As we celebrate National Dietitians Day as part of nutrition month, let's applaud and thank Ontario's

dietitians for helping us make our province the best place in North America to grow up and grow old. I want our dietitians to know we're very proud of their contribution to the health of all of the people of Ontario.

1540

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M^{me} Gila Martow: Au nom de mon chef Tim Hudak, et du caucus progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario, je tiens à exprimer nos meilleurs souhaits à tous les francophones, en Ontario, au Canada et dans le monde, qui célèbrent la 44^e Journée internationale de la Francophonie. De Cornwall à Moonbeam, les communautés francophones de l'Ontario ont contribué de manière essentielle à la diversité culturelle, économique et politique de notre province.

La Journée internationale de la Francophonie est l'occasion de célébrer l'impact que la langue française et la culture francophone ont eu ici en Ontario et dans le monde. La communauté francophone de l'Ontario a joué, et continue de jouer, un rôle majeur dans le développement éducatif, institutionnel et technologique de notre province.

En nous joignant à ceux qui célèbrent cette journée à travers le monde, nous renouvelons notre engagement à apporter des contributions durables aux communautés francophones de l'Ontario et faire en sorte que la culture francophone de l'Ontario continue de prospérer pour toutes les générations à venir.

Je pense que je parle pour tout le monde ici quand je dis que nous sommes tous francophiles.

BUSINESS CLIMATE

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm pleased to briefly respond to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC Party support improvements to this province's business climate, but the Better Business Climate Act is little more than window dressing.

A quick example, Speaker: If passed, this bill would require each ministry to eliminate at least one regulatory burden per year. Recall that Ontario Liberals axed the Red Tape Commission in 2003, but in the run-up to the 2011 election they had a convenient change of heart on red tape and tabled the Open for Business Act. Today's bill revisits that one.

In January, the minister boasted that the government had eliminated 80,000 regulatory burdens since 2008, hoping we would forget that the same claim was made by the previous minister in January 2012, that we'd forget that in March 2011, that minister's predecessor boasted of having axed 70,000 pieces of red tape since 2008, or that the former Premier promised a 25% reduction in red tape by 2011. Three years later, we're still at 17%.

Ontario's economy is facing serious challenges. Ontario's people deserve a government that is serious about the economy.

In conclusion, Speaker, this bill is nothing more than more red tape.

DIETITIANS DAY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Speaker, the month of March is recognized across Canada as Nutrition Month, brought to us by the Dietitians of Canada and the thousands of dietitians working here in Ontario.

This year, Nutrition Month's message is designed to inspire Canadians to get back to cooking basics and to involve children and youth with meal preparations. In today's busy world, there is concern that fewer families have time to cook meals together, missing an important opportunity to transfer cooking skills to the next generation. Cooking meals from scratch has been shown to increase intake of vegetables, fruits and whole grains, which are the foundation of a healthy diet. We also know that children who are involved in preparing meals are more likely to make better food choices.

Nutrition Month activities are taking place in communities across the province, with registered dietitians promoting cooking events to help Ontarians create delicious and healthy meal choices.

Today, March 19, is also the fifth annual Dietitians Day.

By preventing and managing chronic diseases and promoting recovery, dietitians perform an important role in our health care system, and their Nutrition Month initiatives are just one example of their dedication to improving the health of all Ontarians.

BUSINESS CLIMATE

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to respond to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade with regard to the Better Business Climate Act.

Clustering, one of the major themes of this act, or aligning skilled people, research institutions and corporate collaborations to build innovation ecosystems, is increasingly recognized as a significant opportunity to enhance economic growth. The idea focuses on increasing productivity through innovation instead of taking advantage of geography or circumstance to overcome input costs. It's a concept that was introduced by Michael Porter of the Harvard Business School and advanced more recently by such Canadian scholars as David Wolfe, David Robinson and Matthew Lucas.

Cluster development can help Ontario's tech sector, health science sector and manufacturing sector, among others.

I know well of the advantages that are gained by businesses operating in Kitchener–Waterloo in the tech sector especially. The proximity of innovative firms, of incredible universities and talented, trained young people has spurred the tech ecosystem we all talk so much about.

However, other regions in Canada have flourishing clusters and have been doing a great deal more to promote their clusters, supporting them through policy and

investment. For example, Quebec and especially the Montreal area have vibrant pharmaceutical and aerospace clusters. Ontario could do a lot more to promote the development of our own hubs.

In Ontario, though, I see a tremendous amount of potential in Kitchener–Waterloo's tech sector, in the financial services sector of Toronto, and in the development of an advanced manufacturing sector in Hamilton and London. But these clusters need a government that supports them.

I recognize the admirable intent of this bill. I have held numerous meetings with experts who have pointed out the importance of clustering, encouraging interaction, and building cross-sector networks.

I find it hopeful, actually, that part of this legislation focuses on reducing the regulations which many find excessive. Stakeholders I've met with have described the tangle of regulation as a significant hurdle to overcome.

In conclusion, I look forward to making this bill stronger, to making sure the province of Ontario has the resources they need, and working towards the goal of strengthening business in the province.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Demain, on célébrera la Journée internationale de la Francophonie—quel beau moment pour célébrer nos acquis et planifier notre avenir.

Du côté des célébrations, bien, c'est sûr, mon projet de loi pour rendre le bureau du commissaire aux services en français indépendant a finalement vu jour au travers de la ministre déléguée aux services en français. Avec ce projet de loi, on assure la pérennité du commissaire aux services en français, et j'en suis très fière.

Cette année, également, les francophones et francophiles se sont motivés pour se tourner sérieusement vers le dossier d'une université franco-ontarienne. J'aimerais remercier Alain Dupuis et son équipe de la FESFO, qui a tenu des séances de consultation dans toutes les régions de notre province pour préparer les états généraux qui auront lieu au mois de septembre.

Je suis prête à dire que si l'Ontario avait eu une université francophone, les problèmes avec le collège d'Alfred, on ne les aurait pas vécus, et il ne serait pas dans la situation dans laquelle il se trouve en ce moment.

Je veux également, en cette journée, féliciter les six récipiendaires de l'Ordre de la Pléiade, nos nouveaux Chevaliers et Chevalières : Nicole Fortier, Elaine Legault, Ronald Marion, Germaine Paquette, Paul-François Sylvestre et Denis Vaillancourt.

DIETITIANS DAY

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's also my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Health regarding national Dietitians Day, with March being Nutrition Month. This is their fifth anniversary.

We all understand the importance of nutrition to our health. People often say we are what we eat. This is

something that is important for the month of March, but it is important every day of the year. It is my pleasure to stand today to recognize the registered dietitians who are working in Ontario.

I'm also very happy that my calorie labelling bill has reached second reading. The bill will make it mandatory for restaurants to not only put the price on their menu boards but to also put the number of calories with every single menu item, and would mandate a check for high-sodium items.

For reasons unknown to me, the minister put forward a bill very similar to mine, but she did not include sodium. I will tell you that dietitians know that calories and sodium are directly linked to so many chronic diseases, whether you talk about hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, strokes and many more.

I would encourage everyone to have a look at what the dietitians of Ontario have put forward through Simply Cook and Enjoy! This is where you make nutritious meals.

VISITEURS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the minister responsible for francophone affairs.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais présenter ici aujourd'hui, dans la galerie en nord avec nous, le maire du village de Casselman, Claude Levac; les conseillers municipaux Francyn Leblanc et Michel Desjardins; et puis le directeur général, Marc Chénier. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

1550

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the cost of electricity in Ontario continues to escalate; and

"Whereas other charges associated with electricity, such as delivery, regulatory, global adjustment and debt retirement charges make electricity increasingly unaffordable; and

"Whereas these costs have imposed a significant hardship on ratepayers and driven industry and jobs out of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Premier and the Minister of Energy reduce the waste and duplication in Ontario's electricity sector and take other necessary steps to lower the cost of electricity so that Ontario's electricity prices are competitive with other jurisdictions."

I agree with this petition and will give it to page Milana.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I fully agree and will give this to page Urooj.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents of Durham.

"Whereas Hydro One Networks Inc. (Hydro One) is proposing construction of a new transformer station on a 100-acre site in Clarington, near the Oshawa-Clarington boundary;

"Whereas the site is on the Oak Ridges moraine/greenbelt;

"Whereas concerns have been raised about the environmental impacts of this development, including harm to wildlife as well as contamination of ponds, streams and the underground water supply;

"Whereas sites zoned for industrial and/or commercial use are the best locations for large electricity transformer stations;

"Whereas most, if not all, residents do not agree this project is needed and that, if proven to be necessary, it could be best accommodated at alternative locations such as Cherrywood or Wesleyville;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Ontario Legislature support the preservation of the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt and the natural environment at this site. We also ask that the Ontario Legislature require the Clarington transformer station to be built at an alternative location zoned for an industrial facility and selected in accordance with the best planning principles."

I'm pleased to sign and support it and present it to Nusaybah.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from a very nice lady in my riding, Mrs. Lois McRae, in Val Caron. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to "mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask our page Nick to bring it to the Clerk.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

Mr. Speaker, I concur with this petition. I'll affix my name to it.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of Geri Suts, from my riding of Essex, who suffers from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely

exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I will affix my name to this petition and send it to the Clerks' table through Callista.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: "Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens," confident in themselves;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds" to pay for therapy;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices" in Ontario.

I'm pleased to sign and support it and present it to Simon, one of the new pages here at Queen's Park.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to present this petition on behalf of the Renters Educating and Networking Together.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas escalating rental costs are making Ontario less affordable and leaving many tenants financially insecure or falling into poverty;

"Whereas tenants living in residential apartments and condominiums built after 1991 are not protected within the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) by rent control guidelines, nor are they protected from other arbitrary changes to their rent which currently cannot be appealed to the Landlord and Tenant Board;

"Whereas this has created an unfair two-tier system of tenant protection in Ontario, where some tenants have no protection from large and arbitrary increases;

"Whereas removing these simple exemption loopholes in the RTA law will help protect tenants and help make housing more affordable and secure for thousands of Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario acts to protect all tenants in Ontario and immediately move to ensure that all Ontario tenants living in buildings, mobile home parks and land-lease communities are covered by the rent control guidelines in the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006."

It's my pleasure to affix my signature and give this to page Justin.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the Ontario government has raised minimum wage by 50% since 2003 and will increase it to \$11, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada, on June 1;

"Whereas both families and businesses in Ontario deserve a fair and predictable approach to setting the minimum wage;

"Whereas indexing minimum wage to CPI is supported by business, labour and anti-poverty groups from across Ontario as the best way to achieve that;

"Whereas indexing ensures minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, providing fairness for workers and their families and predictability for businesses to plan and stay competitive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014."

I fully support the petition, Mr. Speaker. I will give my petition to page Mustfah.

1600

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the University of Guelph's Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario's outstanding post-secondary agricultural schools; and

"Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario and the future success of the region's agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

"Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph's short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Urooj.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in the province; and

"Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province; and

"Whereas in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

"Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians."

One of the key signatures here is Anna Strike from Bowmanville. She has been a tireless worker for over 40 years in our hospitals in the community. I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Kathryn, one of the new pages here.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades;

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople;

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the Wynne government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees, and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I agree with this petition and will be passing it off to page Calvin.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry, and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

"Whereas there is more to full exploitation of technology than having email;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal devices, maximize the many technology offerings and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario...."

In agreement whereof, Speaker, I affix my signature and send it to you via page Isabella.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JOBS AND PROSPERITY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'INFRASTRUCTURE AU SERVICE DE L'EMPLOI ET DE LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 5, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013 / Projet de loi 141, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la prospérité.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When we last debated this, I believe the member from Northumberland—Quinte West had six minutes left.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Mr. Speaker, it's been a week since we last spoke on Bill 141, so I just want to back-track a little bit and touch on a few of the points I was trying to impress upon my esteemed colleagues here at Queen's Park.

I was going through Bill 141 itself, and looking at and highlighting some concerns that I had. I specifically wondered—the section here on page 3, "Infrastructure Planning Principles," and then it says, "Principles," outlines what the government and every broader public sector entity shall consider when looking at the principles here.

I want to skip down to number 4. I find it rather interesting. It says here, "Infrastructure planning and investment should ensure the continued provision of core public services, such as health care and education." I think that's extremely important, because obviously health care and education are paramount on the minds of a lot of Ontarians, not to mention jobs and the job crisis we're currently facing.

To that point, I find that this current government under Premier Wynne—what they're saying is that they are still investing monies in health care, but what we've actually witnessed in my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West is the loss of three RNs at Northumberland Hills Hospital, and the closure of the lab at Trenton Memorial Hospital and the laying off of two and a half staff there. So I'm having difficulties trying to accept what this government says is a principle foundation of health care and education.

I also want to make a point that our fine member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound has made in this House numerous times: That community raised over \$12 million to go toward the building of the Markdale Hospital over 10 years ago, which this government promised that community was going to get; \$12 million raised by the fine people in Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound up in the Markdale area, and some of those individuals who donated and helped fundraise that money have since passed on. That's how long it has taken this Liberal government to move on building the kind of infrastructure that's required in rural Ontario.

As well, moving on to some of the other points I wanted to get to, again under "Principles," section 9, "Infrastructure planning and investment should minimize the impact of infrastructure on the environment and respect and help maintain ecological and biological diversity, and infrastructure should be designed to be resilient to the effects of climate change."

Mr. Speaker, again I have some grave concerns with this Liberal government when it comes to saying one thing—they want to protect the environment, and they proclaim to the fine people of our great province that

they are the champions of the environment, that they care about the environment, environment is number one. Well, I have the privilege of being geographically located on part of the Oak Ridges moraine, which was deemed under Premier Harris and recognized as significant for the aquifers, the water that many of the people here in the Toronto area and the outlying hinterlands heading to the east here use for their drinking water. But this government wants to put up industrial wind turbines on a protected area. In fact, there are endangered species on the Oak Ridges moraine that are going to be hugely impacted by these decisions. I do have some reservations when it comes to this government saying that they care about the environment and yet they turn around and implement such policies as this, disregarding the concerns of people in the area.

1610

I touched on last time, as well, the leadership and the great visionaries of this province from years gone by. I talked briefly about Premier Leslie Frost. When Premier Frost built the 401 miles and miles above Eglinton, which is where the city boundary actually ended at that time, people were wondering, pondering why he would build this highway so far away from the downtown area. As you know, Mr. Speaker, now it's next to impossible to traverse down that corridor about this time of day.

So we do need some vision from leaders, and Tim Hudak has that vision. Tim and the PC caucus, we have been very clear when it comes to gridlock, infrastructure and what needs to happen. We truly believe that, obviously, gridlock in the Toronto area is a major concern, and it does have detrimental impacts to revenue flows to the province and the provincial coffers. We have outlined this. We have been saying this right from day one, that Tim Hudak and the PC Party have a plan to get Ontario back working, and infrastructure is going to be key to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to follow my friend the member from Northumberland-Quinte West. I always appreciate his comments and his insight on all the matters before the House. I do question, however, his correlation between the great Leslie Frost and his vision on infrastructure in this province and the vision of Tim Hudak, the leader of the PC Party of today, because I can assure you—through, I guess, the concept of this bill, in that it deals with alternate financing programs, P3s, in the province of Ontario—that Leslie Frost wasn't looking to dismantle traditional financing projects in the province. They made public investments in public infrastructure, knowing that the value on that dollar was maintained in this jurisdiction, knowing they had a responsibility to provide oversight for the quality of the projects and a responsibility to manage them effectively as a strategic asset in the province, not simply to outsource, privatize and sell off valuable measures of infrastructure. So I certainly question the correlation between the great Leslie Frost and Tim Hudak, who I have not heard propose one measure of public financing. I simply have

heard a focus on solely outsourcing, privatizing and deregulating any aspect of governance in this province.

It's important that we talk about this bill and about the impact that P3s have had on financing projects in health care, infrastructure and education, because they have added a tremendous burden not only to the finances of the project but also to subcontractors, who feel the pressures of multinationals that waver from the basic principles of traditional financing programs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's interesting that the member opposite in the official opposition raises this issue of Leslie Frost. Leslie Frost spent 2% of the province's GDP on infrastructure. In today's dollars, that was \$14 billion. It's interesting because, up until Premier McGuinty, he was the last Premier who did that. This government, in 40 years, is the first government to get back to 2% of GDP, which we are, and we built that over—for five years. This is not a political shot, because there were Liberal and NDP and Conservative governments between now and Leslie Frost.

I have a question for the members opposite. Will the New Democrats and will the Conservatives support a continued infrastructure spend of \$14 billion? We will do that, Mr. Speaker. Why will we do that? We will do that for one reason: because every \$1.50 that we spend on infrastructure brings us back \$7 in net new taxes through economic growth. Infrastructure is the single most important—I'm hoping that the new generation of Conservatives and the new generation of New Democrats are like the new generation of Liberals, that they're committed to a minimum 2% GDP growth.

The other thing that we're talking about is that we have committed an apprenticeship program because right now, according to the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association, between now and 2016, there will be 800,000 skilled jobs in the next 24 months that need to be filled. When the opposition talks about a million jobs, that's actually worse than the job creation rate the government currently has, because right now, according to the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association, we have 800,000 jobs. What's the challenge? We don't have the right skilled workforce, so we're going to take that \$14 billion and require apprenticeships—to create thousands of apprenticeships to get the skills so that we can get those young people into those jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, you almost missed it.

The member from Nepean-Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to commend my colleague from Northumberland-Quinte West when we're talking about transportation infrastructure, and I also appreciate your indulgence in allowing me to get back to my seat.

My colleague has been, I think, a tremendous advocate in this assembly for his constituents, and I think most

members here would agree. He has raised quite a substantial number of issues with respect to the 401 and the road maintenance issues there and the infrastructure challenges we have.

Earlier today, my colleagues and I met with the ORBA organization, the Ontario Road Builders' Association, and talked about some of the challenges that we have here in the province of Ontario. Many of us that do have to take the 401 to work each week, from parts of eastern Ontario or southwestern Ontario—we talk about these issues.

Later on this afternoon, I will have an opportunity to speak directly to the bill and I'll have that opportunity—I believe we're in 10-minute rotations.

I must say that the issue of infrastructure planning and the issue of infrastructure funding are all very critical to us. I actually sat in this assembly before the minister did, and what I remember from his government is that they came with a commitment. Mr. Hillier may remember this, and Mr. Hardeman. They came and said, "Whatever we have in terms of a surplus, we'll give back to municipalities." Remember that? They said they'd give it back in terms of infrastructure funding and transportation. No sooner did they make that commitment, than they started posting massive deficits.

Now that tells me, Speaker, that we have to be very careful, very careful in how we make these commitments to municipalities and, in particular, our constituents. In order to ensure that there is funding available, we have to think about how we can sustain that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to be able to rise and spend a few moments following the member from Northumberland–Quinte West. He focused a lot on his riding, and I'm going to focus a lot on mine in reference to this bill.

I had the opportunity to listen to the leadoff speech from the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure in talking about the beautiful architectural buildings around Toronto, and it inspired me. On my way home, driving on Highway 11, I realized that some of the most beautiful architectural buildings in my riding are train stations: Cobalt, Temagami and several others. They are no longer train stations. Many times, they've been downloaded to the municipalities, but they're beautiful buildings.

1620

Then I was thinking, as I was thinking about this—and this bill is called the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act—that for the last two years people in my riding have been living in chaos because this government announced that they couldn't even afford to keep a railroad track in my riding and that the buses were going to be sold, and now, that our telecommunications system was also on the block. While we're talking about infrastructure for jobs and prosperity, how can we have jobs and prosperity in northeastern Ontario without a railroad, without public transportation and without communications services, which were public—which are public?

That's my question, because for two years northerners have been wondering what is going to become of them. People have been unwilling to invest because we have been worried about losing our public infrastructure. I'd like to get that on the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Northumberland–Quinte West has two minutes.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I want to thank my colleagues for their comments here today.

There's one thing I would like to point out. The Minister of Transportation talks about investment in infrastructure, but you'll know that throughout Ontario the 401 and the 400-series highways have come under new contracts. Just for example, in my stretch of the 401 we went from 17 plows down to nine; we had four sand and salt depots, and we're down to two depots—all in the name of cutbacks by this minister and this government.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You outsourced it. Are you that illiterate?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Transportation will retract that little comment.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: We've had huge numbers of collisions and closures on the 401 this year, the likes of which I've never seen. I have not seen—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Continue. Sorry.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've seen more accidents on my stretch of the 401 in Northumberland than I can recall in 43 years of being there, and it's quite disturbing. For a savings of \$800,000 just for my portion of the stretch of the 401 that's being serviced, we've had numerous closures of the 401 that cost the province and businesses in this province millions of dollars an hour. When the 401 is shut down, it costs this province and businesses millions of dollars. So the money that this government hasn't invested in providing that service is paramount.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You outsourced it. Why are you complaining?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: With that, I would just want to put on the record that the cutbacks this government has made for the plowing services is inadequate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Would you like to read this?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: No, I'm all right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks very much.

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This bill debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, the government would like the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate? The member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Am I correct that I have 20 minutes? It usually goes down to 10 minutes at this point.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: After seven hours, okay; not six and a half. Thank you so much. So I do have 20 minutes.

This bill is a very strange bill. This bill is a bill that the government is bringing forward to have 10-year cycles. Now, we all know in this place that governments are elected on four-year cycles, so I had to start wondering why you want a 10-year cyclical plan when you have a government that's responsible for four years. The only thing I could think of, to start off, is that you want to bind future governments, whether it's yourselves—if you're lucky enough as a government to be re-elected—or some future government so that there is no wiggle room for what they want to do with a new mandate and a new direction.

Let's start from that; let's discuss this for a second. This is a 10-year plan in order to set a direction not only for the government in power, but the government to come. I find this strange as well, because when you look through the body of the bill, the minister responsible doesn't have to stand in the House until three years after the bill comes into effect in order to announce what the plan is, and then has to renew it every five years thereafter. If this were to pass and we were to have an election, then three years from the date, I guess, of the passage of this bill, we'd have another government. And then that government may or may not be able, within those three years, to set out the 10-year plan. But if they do, they will make the announcement and then it will not be reviewed for five years. I was trying to do all the math. The permutations and combinations here are quite amazing. It's not only this government today trying to set out what they're going to do, but it maybe won't even be the next one or the one after that that actually gets to set the five-year plan.

I'm thinking, wow, what kind of a bill is this? What is being proposed here? I have to tell you, I think this is pretty much an empty shell of a bill, when you start from that perspective of, when does it actually kick in? When does the minister actually get to do what he or she needs to do in order to set up the 10-year plan and who is it binding? If it's not binding on their own government but it is binding on a future government, I think all of parliamentary tradition says that that cannot be the case, because no future government can be bound by the actions of one before.

Now, if it's setting up a 10-year plan for the sake of setting up a 10-year plan, so that we can look ahead and see what, at this stage in the evolution of Ontario, needs to be done, I don't really have too many problems with that, if that's all it is. Because, having been a former mayor, we used to have a 10-year plan in East York. We

had a 10-year plan because we looked at all of the roads and the sewer systems and the infrastructure and those things that would have to be replaced, and we had a logical way of setting out which roads would be prepared in each year's budgetary cycle and which would likely be repaired or renewed or rebuilt, or sometimes brand new ones built, within the three years, as it was then, of the council's mandate. I don't have a problem with that, if that's what this is. But that's not what I see here, and that's clearly not what the legislation says. It says that the plan will be announced three years after the coming into force of the act and then will be renewed each five years. If it's renewed for five years, it's beyond the mandate of that government and even beyond the mandate of the next one. So we start from that.

This is a bill that I think is being put forward as a government action that is likely to placate some of the construction stakeholders. They need to know, they want to know and, I think, in many cases, economically have to know where the money is going to be spent so that they can buy the equipment and hire people and know whether or not they're likely to get government contracts or what ones might be available. If you're going to start buying multimillion-dollar pieces of machinery to pave roads or to construct edifices or to dig ditches or to build subways, clearly you need to know those kind of things. I think that's what the bill has intended. It's not intended so much for the government or for taxpayers, but more so for the construction industry that is seeking some kind of assurance that there is an ongoing commitment to the projects to be built.

I understand the government needs to make long-term plans, and I'm appreciative of the fact that the bill says that the government must be mindful of demographics. If you're mindful of demographics, you need to know some very unpleasant truths. You need to know that the cities in southern Ontario are expanding at a fairly rapid rate, particularly in the Toronto area and the GTHA, but also in some of the areas around it: Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph, Ottawa. Some of the cities of Ontario are expanding at a pretty fast rate. If you look at those demographics—and I think the best way to look at those is in the new changes to the federal riding boundaries—you can see where the population is growing in Canada and where it's starting to decline.

1630

If this bill comes into effect, I am slightly worried—and I would seek assurances, perhaps from the minister, if he chooses to make comments at the end of my speech—that this is not going to badly affect places in rural and northern Ontario which, for the last three or four census data figures, have had population declines.

My friend from Timiskaming, when he spoke a few minutes ago in his two-minute hit, talked about the railway edifices in his particular towns in his riding, and the railway and buses and the communications network, which seems to be, as we're talking about this, being dismantled. I have to state, Mr. Speaker, that if you're looking at the demographics, that's exactly what is going

to happen. If the government is committed to building in those places where the populations will grow and increase, then quite conceivably most of those will be built in southern Ontario, particularly in that corridor around Toronto, Hamilton and down into Niagara, with perhaps some going to Ottawa as well, because those are the places of all the big population growth.

It says in the body of the bill another thing which I appreciate as a former mayor and municipal councillor: that we are going to work with municipalities. Municipalities are probably the group that is best able to tell this government or even, indeed, the federal government—any government—exactly where the money should be spent. Municipalities have a very good handle—a far better handle than we do here in the province, or the federal government does—on where infrastructure money needs to be spent, because they're on the ground. They are the body that is closest to not only that infrastructure but to the people.

Having worked there, I will tell you that every single municipality has engineering departments. They have people who can tell you the lifetime of the roads, the bridges, the sewers and anything else that has to be built. So whenever the governments—our government and the government in Ottawa—come forward and somehow they find some money and they want to partner with the municipalities, it is always the municipalities that come forward and announce what the projects are. It's not the federal or provincial government that comes forward and says, "We have money for you, but you must build a bridge there." It's the reverse. It's the municipalities that say, "If you're going to give us money, this is where it needs to be spent, because we have studied all of this and we know full well where the best bang for the buck is going to come for us." It may be just replacing a water treatment plant. Many northern communities are having a hard time meeting the regulations, post-Walkerton. It may be all of those things.

I'm glad that there's something written in here about the municipalities. I think we need to and have to not only continue to work with municipalities but give them even more leverage and more say on where the money is spent. If we are going to be committed to doing the infrastructure in a correct manner, we have to have the municipalities decide what they want, rather than us imposing upon the municipalities some kind of great provincial scheme.

I look sometimes with some dismay on great provincial schemes. I watched as Metrolinx unfolded and came up with plans on how they were going to pay for subways or not have subways, and how they were looking at where the money was going to come from or not come from. Even this government wasn't willing to look at the plans that they had because this was more a provincial plan than a municipal plan, because it involved many municipalities. I understand that. It involved many municipalities. The plan they came up was not acceptable to this government, so they went out and they hired Anne Golden and a few people to come up with a different

plan. Anne Golden and a few other people came up with a different plan. Now that plan, too, has been rejected.

I don't know how the infrastructure is going to be built. I'm breathless in watching what is going to happen: whether there will be a subway in Scarborough or not a subway; whether there's going to be an LRT line in Scarborough or not an LRT; whether there are going to be relief lines in Toronto or no relief lines.

I think the same thing is unfolding across this entire province. In every single city and municipality, they are wondering what's going to happen to theirs, too, because when the government in its wisdom determines what is going to happen, invariably the municipalities are not listened to to the extent that they should be. The bill provides for it, and I hope that there is a change in attitude, because we cannot and should not be wasting the amounts of time that we have in these past couple of years debating things like whether a subway is necessary in Scarborough or not. If we have money to burn, I think we should build it.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes. I mean, everybody wants a subway. I want a subway.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Everybody wants a subway, but when you can run a subway with only three stops and have to raise an additional billion dollars in money, does that make sense? Does it make sense to the taxpayers, and all of the taxpayers in Ontario, when you can build the same LRT, have 11 stops and not have to raise the extra billion dollars through tax money? Maybe that makes more sense too.

But in the end, the government of Ontario has to be very careful to work with municipalities. I know that Toronto has flip-flopped so many times here, it's hard to blame anybody. It is. It's hard, but mostly it works.

Okay. We've got some other things here. The bill is going to talk about apprentices, and I think this is a good thing, but it doesn't prescribe how many apprentices are going to be used in the projects and the ratio of apprentices that are going to be used. It is important that we use these infrastructure projects not just to build the things that we need here in the province, but to train a future generation in how to accomplish this.

Times are difficult. Trying to bring people from around the world who have different qualifications and suddenly saying, "You're a lathe operator" or "You're a bricklayer" or whatever is involved—it is more important that our youth get that opportunity for the skilled trades, and that when we are building a project we do exactly like some of the other provinces do, and mandate that there is no way that that project can be built unless a number of people are trained in the new field. And the projects have to be of sufficient length and duration that somebody can actually start learning the electrical trade, finish the training and become a journeyman by the end of it, without having to say that, halfway through the project, "The project's over. You're gone. Good luck finding somewhere else to journey or apprentice with."

We need to make sure, when we're building these big projects that last three, four or five years, that people are allowed to come in at the beginning, and they're allowed to take all of their training, pass and get a licence at the end of it. That is absolutely essential, and I hope—although it's not in here—that the government will do this kind of thing in the regulations.

We're also looking here at the ministerial authority. I always look at that, in every single bill. The ministerial authority in this bill is probably the widest open I have ever seen in any bill in my 13 years in this Legislature. Perhaps the minister, who's listening here right now, can explain why the minister, or any future minister, requires the kind of authority that is vested in this bill. It virtually allows unlimited authority to one person in the future to prescribe, to unprescribe, to make regulations, to do everything under this bill, because as I said earlier, much of this bill is a hollow shell. It's an empty shell, but the ministerial regulatory authority that is being granted here is pretty much open, and perhaps that's the intent.

I want to talk here a little bit—because I've only got a little over four minutes left—about—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay. What is also perturbing to me in this bill is that this appears to be a vehicle that will allow for continuation, or perhaps even an increase, in the number of P3 models taking place here in Ontario. I am no fan of the P3 model. I think that the auditor, when he came forward to this Legislature and told us how much extra we spent using a P3 model to build a hospital in Brampton, pretty well had it right: Unless it can be shown, and shown clearly, that the P3 model is going to save the taxpayers money, then we ought not to be doing it.

1640

I don't see that contained within the body of the bill. I see all kinds of words that are going to encourage us to go into contractual agreements with people who are coming here and who want to build. God bless them; they want to build. But they don't want to build for nothing. They want to build for a profit. God bless them. They should be making a profit. But should they be making the profit on the backs of the taxpayers of Ontario when we can do it ourselves for the same or less cost?

Certainly, we know in this province—and the example in the Brampton hospital is the key one—that where this has been studied around the world, in the United States and particularly in Great Britain and in other places in Canada, the P3 model has been found to be wanting. We know that all of the auditors and political scientists and people who study this have looked and have seen that it doesn't really save the taxpayer any money at all.

In Canada, we have the argument—and this government has said it several times; I've heard them—that you're looking for value for money. I'm not sure that the way that this is gauged, the way it's looked at, is applicable.

We know that scholarly journals—I rely most often on the one prepared by U of T professors Matti Siemiatycki

and Naeem Farooqi. They wrote a very scholarly work in the *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 2012. They looked at 28 P3 models in Ontario and in Canada, and they couldn't find value for money in any of them. They couldn't. They could not find that it was actually saving the taxpayer any money.

Was it built a little faster? Yes, probably it was. It was probably built faster because people were willing to take some minimal risk and put it on the table and governments were willing to debenture it for years and years and years. But in the end nobody can say that 20, 25 or 30 years from now, when that debenture is all paid off, when the whole thing and the mortgage is all paid off, we got a better deal than had we built it ourselves. I have yet to see a single scholarly work that has identified one project in this province that can actually meet that.

If that's what this bill is about, I'm somewhat skeptical, and I wait to hear perhaps some comments from the minister whether or not the bill is intended to increase the number of P3s and what guarantee we have in this province that the P3s will actually give value for money or will actually save the taxpayers money. If it's not going to save the taxpayers money, I am skeptical because my own training as a councillor and as a mayor showed that whenever we contracted out things as simple as garbage, in the end it costs more money to contract them out than it did to keep them in-house. Please—I'm skeptical—just show me how it's going to save money, and we'll talk. But if it's not going to save money, I don't want to see the body of this bill pass and then the regulations allow for something that I don't think is all that good.

In the end, the government ends up with the ultimate risk, even in a P3. Here in this province the best example of that was the gas plants. The signed document was with private companies. When the government walked away from that signed contract, we had to pay over \$1 billion for those two signed contracts. Had we been building those things ourselves, it would have never cost anywhere near that amount of money. So there are risks involved, and we should know it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for my 20 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I just want to back up a little bit here about how we pay for infrastructure, because this does lock us into a 10-year budget. It takes planning documents and turns them into budgets. It allows for a depoliticized process.

The member asked a few questions. He says that we have a number of plans. The Metrolinx funding plan for the Big Move was rejected by your party. You said you couldn't support it. The Golden report came forward. Your party leader said that you couldn't support most of the content for that. You say you're pro-transit and want to make these infrastructure investments. We're committed to 2% of GDP, which is why I asked you if you were there.

Now my friend from Beaches–East York, who I have a great deal of respect for and am very fond of, has said

he doesn't like P3s. Right now, there is a high-speed rail system around London. It's called High Speed 1. It is owned by the teachers' pension fund—100% of Ontario teachers. All the high-speed rapid rail systems are owned. It's a P3. They have an equity position. We have this—can't support new revenue; can't, apparently, find savings—but the entire pension fund. So why isn't OMERS, why aren't teachers' pension funds owning and allowing us to build high-speed rail here—the only model you can do that. Matti Siemiatycki, who I have huge regard for and his research paper—as Roger Martin's—isn't opposed to P3. It actually makes very valid criticisms of what has been our practice, suggests improvements and argues that we should maintain a P3 program. So if the member opposite has read that, help me, because we would like to sincerely work with your party to find some bridge whereby a number of us who view this as a shared progressive view can find a way to fund this together.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I find it interesting in this chamber from time to time, particularly the dialogue that takes place between the New Democrats and the Liberals. It's like they disagree on everything. They're fighting all the time. It's like that married couple that can't agree on anything, but the one thing they do agree on is that they are not getting a divorce. So here they are. It's "No, you guys do this wrong" and "You guys never did this" and "You don't support this" and "You voted against this" and then—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order, the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I don't think the member is speaking to the bill. Not even close.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe that he was doing a comparative analysis, and it's within the guidelines.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, thank you very much. The minister will have his opportunity.

But the one thing that always seems to happen, and that's why it reminds me of that scenario, is that they're going to fight like cats and dogs, but then, when the day of decision comes—

Mr. Rob Leone: The day of reckoning.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —the day of reckoning, when it is time to vote on a budget, what happens is that the New Democrats will either sit on their hands, avoid the place or they'll find a reason to somehow support the government and prop it up through another cycle. All I'm saying, folks, is that if you cannot get along, just end the relationship and give Ontarians what they want—an election—so they'll decide what's going to be the infrastructure plan for the next five or 10 or 20 years. Don't worry about what the minister is saying. Don't worry about what the New Democrats are saying. Let's go to the people. Maybe if we got a budget, then we could—maybe they will actually vote against this budget, who

knows? But we first have to get a budget. So when you guys get a budget, let's have a chat.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks very much. I'm not quite sure how much that related to what we were discussing, but that's fine.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's always a pleasure to comment on the reaction that the member from Beaches–East York brings to this Legislature. It's a lot of experience, and I think he delved into this piece of legislation very effectively.

I do want to remind, though, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke that even sometimes dysfunctional marriages can be very productive. Children are born of dysfunctional marriages, and results can be attained, as we have proven already through two budget sessions. Some of those concessions that we have received through the last two budget sessions have actually benefited the people of this province. There are always two sides to a discussion. You have accomplished nothing and almost relegated yourself to complete and utter irrelevance.

That said, with regard to G141, I think in particular what I would like to comment on is the P3 conversation, because the alternative financing plan that has been shopped around—a lot of things have been shopped around. A lot of things have been ridden out and then backpedalled on, and I think that the P3 discussion is a very important one. It's also important to remember that a number of the Auditor General reports have found significant failures to transfer risk in P3 projects. The key question in Ontario is not whether the risk has been transferred but at what cost? In other words, is the estimated risk premium paid to the private partner a real and accurate cost? There have been inconsistencies. I'm not sure we've got this alternative financing plan and P3 plan nailed down yet.

1650

I think the member from Beaches–East York brings a valid concern to the way this legislation is crafted. As usual, there are lots of weaknesses in the legislation, and of course it's part of our job to point them out. But it's also our job to make it better, and that's what we stay focused on. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Of course I support my honourable colleague Glen Murray, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, with regard to Bill 141.

It's with some trepidation that I speak in front of the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Speaker, because as you may remember, his brother was in fact my debating coach in high school. But to continue his marital/spousal analogy, the first victims of any kind of spousal breakup are, of course, the children, and by extension of the analogy, the people of Ontario. I think that in this situation, in a minority Legislature, we are obligated to work together, to process ideas—yes, to have, as you said, the nasty arguments that may in fact

allow tempers to flare—but at the end of the day, that is called democracy.

Speaker, there are of course, as you know, a number of different points in this bill, whether it's skills training and apprenticeship or promoting design and excellence. I would simply say that our own expenditure of \$14 billion on infrastructure on an annual basis for approximately the last decade or so demands that we professionalize it, that we bring forward more apprenticeships who will be fully aware of all the different aspects, for example, of architectural design.

I remember attending a conference—I think it was a cityscape conference—and being struck by the phrase the “built environment” that must take into account not merely its functionality but, if I may say, Speaker, it's got to soothe the soul or bring the spirit into concrete. Because at the end of the day, as a health practitioner, the environment affects so many things, whether it's our physical fitness, opportunities to walk our calories off and simply maintain an environment that's relatively stress-free—I might even say, as was mentioned earlier, to beautify the place. All of these aspects, I think, are incorporated within Bill 141.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Beaches–East York, two minutes.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's always a pleasure to listen to some of the comments. I thank the Minister of Transportation; the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who never ceases to amaze me with his humour; the member from Kitchener–Waterloo; and the member from Etobicoke North.

I've only got two minutes, but I'd like to thank the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for commenting so positively on what I had to say.

The member from Renfrew, of course, in his own inimitable style, is funny—I never likened what we do in here to some kind of divorce. Also, the member from Etobicoke pointed out the people who ultimately get hurt in a divorce.

I want to leave most of my time for the Minister of Transportation. He made some kind of comment I have heard in this House before, which I often find bizarre, that somehow New Democrats aren't pro-transit enough. I find that very strange.

I was not part of the government between 1990 and 1995. I was a mayor in those days, through most of that. I remember going to Metro council, and I remember voting on the four subway lines that that government was trying to put in. I remember voting for each and every one of them, and I remember what came after when, one by one, they were chopped out by the incoming Progressive Conservative government of Mike Harris.

I don't remember New Democrats not being in favour of transit, and I've never heard a single one of my colleagues in this Legislature, in caucus or anywhere else ever speak against transit. I don't know where this is made up; I don't know where it comes from.

Interjection: Where's the money?

Mr. Michael Prue: The question is always: Where do we get the money? We're still waiting for the govern-

ment to tell us where you anticipate getting the money to build what we all want.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to join the debate with my colleagues this afternoon on Bill 141 and to discuss how we are going to bring infrastructure into our province, how we're going to pay for it, how we are going to plan for it, and how we are going to sustain the jobs we have now and then grow them for the future.

I'd first like to say, on behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, we obviously support the principles for the need for long-term planning and infrastructure. I say this also as the Ontario Progressive Conservative energy critic. Infrastructure with respect to our energy sector is critical. The infrastructure investments should be prioritized. I think we all would agree that it should be dealt with on a specified list of criteria. For example, we do have challenges in many of our communities. They have to be prioritized. In Ottawa alone, for example, we have an over \$1-billion deficit on our existing infrastructure, a \$1-billion deficit that's required to upgrade that. So yes, it's important to have priorities not on just what is needed in the future to build, but also how we protect and sustain the infrastructure we've already got.

It's also important that we should know the current state of all government-owned infrastructure assets. I would view infrastructure assets as a school or a hospital; I would view that as a roadway; I would view that as our energy infrastructure. I think that it's imperative that we have that information. Otherwise, it is going to be impossible to plan for its upkeep, its upgrade and any possible changes or new builds.

Finally, we also agree with the principle that the government should publish, at minimum, a 10-year plan that would set out the anticipated infrastructure needs and a strategy to meet those needs, and I say that with this current backdrop. I think it's really important to bring this into context.

I've been here now long enough to remember they brought in Infrastructure Ontario to do just this. So I think this bill, in many respects, suggests that there has been a failure on behalf of Infrastructure Ontario and previous ministers of this government to do what they had set out to do over a decade ago.

I also want to take issue with the title of the bill: An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. I can't tell you how many pieces of legislation have come into this House, this assembly, to talk about jobs and prosperity. In fact, what we have seen, Speaker, is the opposite has occurred. We have actually lost jobs in Ontario despite all of these jobs and prosperity acts that they continually bring in. One that comes to mind is the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, which promised us 50,000 new jobs in Ontario through infrastructure in wind and solar. Instead, what we have seen is we have lost jobs. The Auditor General said that for every job that we create, we lose four as a result of it. So in fact the

50,000 jobs that were promised as a result of the Green Energy and Green Economy Act have never materialized. In fact, that bill has had a reverse effect on jobs.

I also look at the HST legislation. I had the opportunity, before the last election, to be the revenue critic for the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, and I fought that HST tooth and nail. In fact, my colleague Randy Hillier, who is here today, actually launched a sit-in with our former colleague Bill Murdoch to oppose that new tax. When we opposed that new tax, we also brought in 500,000 amendments to one single bill. The Liberals invoked closure, they stopped it, but they did that because they said they could create 200,000 new manufacturing jobs. Speaker, since the HST has been brought into Ontario in a non-revenue-neutral fashion, we have lost even more jobs in the province. We are now at a 300,000-person job loss in the province of Ontario.

So they brought in the green energy act, which was also the green economy act, and promised 50,000 jobs that never materialized. They brought in the HST for more jobs and infrastructure that never materialized.

They also promised, as I stated earlier in my debate, through questions and comments, with the member from Northumberland—Quinte West, that they would continue sustainable funding to municipalities; that when they were in surplus, they would give the rest of the money to municipalities to upgrade their infrastructure or build new infrastructure. Shortly after that, they made every municipality in Ontario very happy, but then ended up in deficit financing, so there wasn't any money for those municipalities, which creates a problem. It was less than honest with the people of the province when they offered that commitment that they knew they could not keep because they were entering into deficit financing territory.

1700

I think, again, when we go back to An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, it sounds nice. It sounds like they're trying to do things. I've just suggested that there are four principles that we can agree on, which are:

- long-term planning for infrastructure;
- infrastructure investments which are prioritized based on a list which we thought Infrastructure Ontario was already doing;
- that we should know the current state of all government-owned infrastructure assets—that's the only way we're going to be able to plan; one would have thought that Infrastructure Ontario would have been doing that as well; and
- that the government should publish, at a minimum, 10-year plans to set out anticipated infrastructure needs. We've got to do that with our municipalities. We've got to do that with our hospitals and our school boards. That's the best way to do this.

As I say, we actually still have crumbling infrastructure in the province of Ontario today, and those assets are \$1 billion alone in the city of Ottawa. We have assets of a billion dollars with the Ottawa-Carleton District School

Board. We've actually got to understand what that price tag will be and then we have to consider how we're going to finance it. That's what I want to talk about for the remainder of my time.

In the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, we have discussed a number of options on how we would continue to fund things.

Earlier today, I had an opportunity to meet with my leader as well as the Electricity Distributors Association. We talked about how, when we assume government very shortly from now, we're going to monetize some of the assets at Hydro One and at the OPG. That is how we believe we can help break the gridlock in communities like Ottawa, Toronto, in the Kitchener-Waterloo area and in London. We would actually make that our priority: assets that Ontario doesn't need that could be run by another company or other shareholders and have value there to fund those transportation and transit initiatives that we need and those infrastructure initiatives that we need.

Secondly, we have led the way in Ontario—starting, of course, with the previous Conservative administration, and I will give credit where it is due with the current Liberal government—on P3 initiatives. I think it has worked well. I think of one—I'm sure that the Minister of Community Safety will agree—the Royal Ottawa Hospital, the way that that was built with a lot of public money. I think of Roger's House in Ottawa, which was built for children's palliative care, with the great assistance of the Ottawa Senators. I think there are opportunities out there that we need to explore.

Our colleague, the critic for education, is here in the assembly as I speak, and we talk openly about expanding that into education so that we could allow our school boards to work with municipalities or other educational institutions in order to build schools so that we can actually continually fund them and ensure that we're doing two things: We're upgrading those facilities in urban areas that have been old and need repair, like in Broadview, in Ottawa, or in suburban communities like mine in Barrhaven, where we need new schools because 10 years ago they were farmers' fields. There are tens of thousands of people who are now in those communities, populated with young families. We have to think about these types of ideas and how we're going to fund all of these new projects, and understand that we cannot just do it alone. We are going to need community partners. The best way to do that, in my opinion, is through P3s, but not only that way.

We should also consider the assets that we have which we don't need that can contribute to supporting those new initiatives, new infrastructure, and of course, those new roads, bridges, schools and hospitals that we so desperately need in a growing province of Ontario—particularly in light of the deficit financing that we find ourselves in, and that debt that we have seen triple over the last decade under the leadership of, first, Dalton McGuinty and now Kathleen Wynne.

Again, it is an honour and a privilege, as always, to stand in my place and have a debate on some of the key

and important issues of the day. As I mentioned, we do have some criticisms of the bill and of the way the government has handled them, but there are a lot of opportunities that I think can be had with legislation like this. There are many principles with which we agree.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to be able to rise in this House and to follow the member from Nepean—Carleton. She made a lot of good points. Quite simply, the need for long-term planning in the government—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is the second time one of your colleagues said something nice about me.

Mr. John Vanthof: But it's very important. There are a lot of basic principles that people would just expect from government, like long-term planning.

Before I came here, I was on the local hospital board, and they didn't need this bill to do long-term planning, because they needed a new roof, and they were planning for the new roof. It wasn't the planning part that was missing; it was where to get the money. That was missing. It's things like that. And I'm going to come back to it. It's one of my favourite subjects.

We're talking about long-term infrastructure planning, yet two years ago, when this government decided to dump the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, which is our long-term infrastructure, there was no planning at all. According to the Auditor General, they didn't even bother consulting anyone when they made that announcement. So, it's not only saying you're going to plan; it's actually demonstrating that there's planning involved.

On our side here, in this corner, especially in my corner of the world, we really wonder if the current government is planning for the whole province, because we need that infrastructure, not just for people, but to move products. A lot of the riches of this province come from our part of the province, and to just say we're going to dump the infrastructure is a complete and total lack of planning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Indeed, I think the member from Nepean—Carleton certainly contributed to the debate this afternoon. We're having an opportunity to talk about planning for infrastructure.

I was a city councillor in the great city of Peterborough from 1985 until the fall of 2003, when I was elected to the Legislature. Of course, during my municipal career—as you did, Mr. Speaker—you would always develop five-year capital plans in the municipality and you would allocate resources.

I remember a very controversial issue in Peterborough that I supported was the introduction of a sewer surcharge to make sure that you had dollars each year to expand and improve your waste water treatment plant. That was controversial, but it did provide for those dollars to keep renewing something that is very essential to one's community.

Certainly, I have been working with ROMA and AMO to come up with an approach for a permanent infrastructure program to make sure that municipalities, rural municipalities, smaller municipalities, have the opportunity to get funding each and every year to attack those asset management plans which we provide resources to, to make that happen. Someone said we should model it like the gas tax that was brought in by the Honourable Paul Martin when he was finance minister, which provided a revenue stream each and every year for municipalities to address their management plan.

But I just want to touch upon green energy for a moment. About a month ago, I had the opportunity to meet with Elyse Allan, who is the president of GE Canada. She was touring the Peterborough plant along with the mayor of Peterborough, and Elyse Allan indicated to me that at any time she would like to meet with the caucuses of the opposition and the third party to talk about how GE is anticipating \$1 billion in sales in Canada and Ontario in renewable energy. In fact, in Peterborough today, they have developed an innovator which takes DC from solar to convert it to AC so people can use that energy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments? Well, we have two standing up. Which one is speaking? The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I apologize.

I listened carefully to the member from Nepean—Carleton. Now, the member from Nepean—Carleton speaks very passionately, and her two critic files have been on the human infrastructure side when she was education critic, and now the energy critic, which is the physical infrastructure. She knows of what she speaks. A lack of plan and a lack of vision are really inherent in this plan.

1710

How does this apply to me? Well, I look at my riding of Durham and I see, for instance, the lack of infrastructure there. They promised the 407 would be done in 2015-16, and they cancelled it. So they are great at promising things; very poor at delivering those promises. It's tragic.

Another part: Then they came forward with the big Metrolinx plan. The big Metrolinx plan is a \$50-billion, unfunded vision. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure is here. He knows that they promised and then cancelled the 407.

Interjection: We did not. That's not true.

Mr. John O'Toole: Look, take two minutes on my remarks and try and rebut them, because it's not there and you promised it would be. In fact, Jeff Leal, the member from Peterborough, had his picture taken before the last election on the future site of the 407. That sign will fall down before it's even built.

The other part of it too: They promised transit systems in Durham. It is tragic. They promised that there would be rail transit to Clarington. It won't be there for 2020, if then, because they put in an infrastructure piece that isn't there—it's not funded—which is a bridge across the 401.

I don't trust this government. They promise things and deliver nothing.

Look at the health care system. Look at the education system. Look at the entire—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise again on Bill 141, Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, which I think is an attempt on behalf of the government to pay homage to our federal cousins and the quite elaborate titles of their bills, which ultimately prove to be nothing more than window dressing as well as a massive expenditure on advertising, as we've seen with the jobs and prosperity act or whatever the Harper regime has done.

I want to focus on the P3 aspect of the bill because I believe that the impetus for the bill has come from a real concern from our construction sector about the government's reliance on P3s and particularly bundling of government projects through either service centres or other infrastructure projects. What it ultimately does is privatize the profits made on infrastructure projects and socialize the costs and the risks.

That's no more evident than what we see in the Windsor-Essex parkway, the Herb Gray Parkway, the plan to ultimately link a new bridge to Detroit and that vital economy there. We see a Spanish company that has really applied a massive amount of downward pressure on local contractors, crushed them under burdens of contractual obligations, in some instances, having to sign a 900-page document just to get the ability to bid and then have their bid overturned and undercut. This is nothing more than a reliance on outsourced, private financing regimes that don't actually benefit the folks who are paying for these projects, who are Ontarians. We would hope that the government would see a different light and return to a more traditional method of financing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nepean—Carleton has two minutes.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Again, it's my pleasure to respond to my colleagues. I appreciate the contributions of the members from Timiskaming—Cochrane, from Essex and the Minister of Rural Affairs. I want to give particular thanks to my colleague from Durham for his charitable remarks. I would also like to say thank you to him for discussing the two portfolios I've recently had, currently with energy and the second one, education. We come here and we're not only critics in a shadow cabinet; we also are local MPPs and we represent constituencies that we're all very proud of.

That's why I wanted to take what time I have remaining to discuss three infrastructure requirements I have in my community and why I think we have to start thinking, through our school boards—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —that we have to plan and make sure that we have the finances in order to do that. I think specifically of—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I really love it. You guys are the biggest problem for talking when your people are talking. Even the member was pointing, and then, of course, you encouraged it. It was lovely. Can we move on now?

I'm sorry I took up some of your time, but these things happen when your members speak. Go ahead.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You're finished?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 141, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. The title is somewhat misleading. I would say, but I'm going to cover a few issues and a few concerns that we have with it.

I just want to reflect on what's in the bill first: All broader public sector entities "must consider a specified list of infrastructure planning principles when making decisions" related to infrastructure. These principles include things like, one, taking a "long-term view." That makes sense. Two, "decision-makers should take into account the needs of Ontarians by being mindful of ... demographic and economic trends in Ontario." That makes sense. We're referring to these two recommendations as a use-your-brain clause. But these principles should already underlie all infrastructure planning as it stands in the province of Ontario right now.

"The Minister of Infrastructure must periodically develop a" 10-year "infrastructure plan" providing "a description of the government's anticipated infrastructure needs ... and a strategy to meet those needs. Each long-term infrastructure plan must be made public." There have been issues around transparency, so we're pleased to see that there's at least an effort to make any planning very public and very open.

"The government must consider a specified list of criteria when evaluating and prioritizing proposed projects for the construction of infrastructure assets." Criteria should include whether the project fits in the municipal plans.

This is, actually, a very interesting point, because in Waterloo region the municipality has been planning infrastructure—they've done a five-year plan and then a longer-term infrastructure plan and planning for growth. In the Places to Grow Act, they were highlighted as one of the areas in Ontario which should have intensification. So they planned accordingly, and they did extensive consultation, and they planned for intensification in their core, to try to prevent some of those extra costs of infrastructure that we can't afford: the roads and the sewers for the additional subdivisions that we're not sure that we do need.

The recommendation came out that we would only develop around, I think it was, 88 acres. That was challenged at the OMB by some interests who want to

expand growth—really, for me, it's unsustainable growth. The OMB came back and ruled that the municipality must expand their growth plans to over 1,000 acres.

There is a huge disparity between what the municipality planned for and consulted about, and then the OMB—ironically, in many respects—overruled the provincial policy, the provincial government. So that disconnect is an issue.

I think that it makes it very difficult for municipalities to plan financially in a responsible way, and I want to highlight that as an issue, because there are some long-standing issues with the Ontario Municipal Board. We have very clearly articulated them on this side of the House: that they are unelected and they should not be undermining, one, provincial policies like the Places to Grow Act and, two, municipalities, who are duly elected by the citizens of those communities and are tasked with planning in a very responsible way.

I do want to give an example of why long-term planning is needed, though. This morning I asked a question of the Premier on the announcement that was made in Kitchener-Waterloo yesterday. The press release was on two-way, all-day GO. I took exception to that. It certainly prompted, I would think, a very strong response from the Premier this morning, because what she said she was going to be giving to Waterloo region yesterday—two-way, all-day—is not the reality of what is actually going to be happening by 2016, 2020 or 2030, for that matter.

I think that there is a need for a 10-year strategy. I think that that plan needs to be open. We in the NDP caucus share the concerns that projects like this can be just used as political footballs—just to review that project.

I just wanted to commend the city of Kitchener and the city of Waterloo and the respective businesses that have come forward with a strategy. They've made a business case for strategic investment in the innovative regional economies, strategic infrastructure for GO Transit, two-way, all day. When I say two-way, all day, I just want to be sure that everybody understands. It means that not only can commuters from Kitchener-Waterloo or commuters from Guelph or Milton get to Toronto in a reasonable amount of time, but it also means that people who are in Toronto can actually get to one of the strongest economic engines outside of Toronto, which is Kitchener-Waterloo. That is the fundamental difference.

1720

Just to clarify, my issue and the question that I brought to the floor of the Legislature this morning has to do with the integrity of that announcement yesterday, because it is not two-way, all day. Two-way means that people can get to Kitchener-Waterloo and people from Kitchener-Waterloo can get to Toronto, and that is just not the case. It just isn't. It doesn't matter how many press releases and how many ribbons are cut; as it stands right now, that plan is not a reality.

But there is a strong investment. Our leader, Andrea Horwath, met with the mayors and representatives from

Guelph, Kitchener and Waterloo. We met with Communitech; we met with the insurance industries. We have fully explored their plan, and it does make a lot of sense. In fact, the business case for this kind of strategic investment of upgrading the lines and creating this infrastructure—which is sustainable, which actually would work for commuters because it would be faster. It would meet the needs of commuters. This is the thing about public transit: It will not be successful if it takes two and a half hours to get from Kitchener-Waterloo to Toronto. People just will not opt for it.

I want to commend the mayor of Kitchener. The counterpoint was that people would come back and say, "But the highways are faster." But really—I think, so far, they've been tracking the 401; actually, it was shut down 13 times this year.

We do need to refocus our attention on a sustainable transit plan, and quite honestly, it has come from the business sector. It should be incorporated into a 10-year strategy that is fully costed out. We know where the revenue streams can come from.

I want to give you one good stat that indicates how important it is and why it is a good investment. The net employment growth from this investment—let me back up. The tech clusters in Kitchener, Waterloo and Toronto employ 205,000 people, second in North America only to the Silicon Valley corridor between San Francisco and San Jose. The major difference is that the Silicon Valley's commuter systems are more advanced, more modernized, and they were built into the economic plan of that area.

Ontario suffers from lower urbanization, which leads to lower productivity. The net employment growth from this investment, if we move ahead with this project, which New Democrats want to do and will be planning for, is estimated at 37,000 jobs, which would generate \$2.5 billion in income and \$542 million in personal income taxes annually, measured in 2013 dollars. What you have here is basically a business case for this kind of investment.

As leaders in Kitchener-Waterloo—business and public leaders—this project literally, through job creation, through income tax revenue, almost pays for itself. You just need the leadership to come to the table and make the commitment. If Bill 141 in any way, shape or form would guarantee that to happen—I do not see it, but it doesn't mean that it can't happen. I think we have to put our collective interests, our shared interests to see a more prosperous Ontario, and that obviously means an infrastructure and transit strategy which connects economic clusters and hubs and ensures that not only people, but goods and services are transferred between those clusters.

We are absolutely committed to making sure this happens. It will be costed out. Whenever the election happens, whenever that platform does come out, you will see it there. You will see leadership from the NDP on the transit file and on the infrastructure file: You have my guarantee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to commend the member from Kitchener—Waterloo because I agreed with about 99% of what she said, and I appreciate that.

I want to get to the point, though, because right now, for the first time in 40 years, if what you said is true, and I believe it's so, we have enough members in this House—because I would agree with you; I endorse the plan and am working right now, as we bring our budget forward—to have a few historic moments where there could be a stable majority of MPPs here to do these kinds of things because the Big Move now is not just a discussion document, it's a \$50-billion investment. I want to say to the member opposite, because I agree with her, that we are now about \$20 billion into it of already expended money. So we're about six years into a 25-year funding program, and we've already committed or spent \$20 billion that we can't take back. The Kitchener-Waterloo LRT is a big part of it.

I want to just address this because—the contrast between our friends in the NDP, whom I have never had an issue with—the arguments are there, it's how do you pay for it? We need to work together. We have had two reports. As transportation minister, I'm working on another set of funding options. But if we're actually serious, and I'll take it that you're serious, I'm hoping that in the next few weeks we can come to an understanding about a set of funding tools. If we can't, then it's simply rhetoric.

To the member from Durham who spoke earlier, I just figured out one way we could pay for it. The 407 extension is half built. It's out there. We have billions of dollars committed. The land is bought, but apparently the member from Durham says it doesn't exist. Maybe the members over there who actually understand that we're spending billions of dollars, we could just cancel that project because he doesn't—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. *Interjection.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. *Interjection.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister had to get his last sentence in, didn't he? When I stand, you sit. That's how it works. Thank you.

The member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you very much, Speaker. When I was reading this legislation, I have to say that I had to take more than a few grains of salt to help digest it.

What I notice during this debate is that nobody's mentioned that there's already a 10-year build plan in Ontario. We've had it for a long time. The minister hasn't mentioned it. There is a 10-year plan and there has been for quite some time. So why have we got this new piece of legislation to have and announce that we've got a new 10-year plan? Of course, this plan goes along with all the other plans that we have—the northern growth

plan and the smart growth plan. We're going to have to have some planners in the infrastructure ministry to plan the planners, I guess, or to plan the plans so they know which ones they ought to be putting forward.

I'd like to know from the minister today—seeing that he's here—is the real motivation for this new legislation that when the Liberals want to change the plan, they won't be allowed to change the plan?

I'm thinking about things like the gas plants. If the gas plants were in the plan and an election came along, could they alter the plan or would they not be able to? Is this now going to prevent the Liberals from going around and altering the plan when a by-election comes along or when a general election comes along?

That's why I really had to take a little bit of salt with this new plan, because it's just the same as every other Liberal plan: Around and around and around the little Energizer bunny plans go, but the results are always the same.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: Before I comment on my friend from Kitchener—Waterloo, I just want to welcome back the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington—I had to put them all in the right order there. His contribution to this House is enormous, and we've missed him for a while, but thank you for coming back and lightening up the place again.

1730

To my colleague from Kitchener—Waterloo, she made some very good points, and I think we need to reflect on them. The first one is her question today in the House about two-way, all day. The question is a real one because it isn't just bringing people to Toronto in the morning to work here all day and go home at night—and, yes, you can put on some extra cars to bring more people from Kitchener—Waterloo and Guelph, and then send them back at night—the question is also whether you're going to take people from Toronto and have them go in the morning to Kitchener—Waterloo or Guelph to work in the sector there. That's the important thing. This cannot be Toronto-centric. And I say that as someone from Toronto. It needs to move two ways. I think she's made a good point today.

She also talked about the 10-year strategic plan that Kitchener—Waterloo has put forward. I think that that municipality has shown very strong municipal strength in doing what they have done in putting forward a cogent and coherent plan, and asking the government to follow it.

Then she closed out by talking about the need to build transit and the question of how business is going to be involved. She made a promise at the end—I think one that, perhaps, surprised the minister opposite. But she made a promise, and I think we need to say as New Democrats that the question isn't whether we have the transit; the question is who is going to pay for it. That is the ultimate question, and it needs to be answered.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to stand up today and support Bill 141.

As a former municipal councillor, it was our practice to plan in advance and to have a five- or 10-year plan for our infrastructure, and that's the best way to keep your infrastructure—roads, sewers and all the municipal infrastructure—in good working condition. I'm glad that the minister is bringing this legislation, and it's very specific in the legislation that this has to be done.

Another matter in the bill that I wanted to speak about is promoting design excellence in public works—do we ever need that. When you travel the world and you see what is being done in other countries, and you come back and everything that you see is stone, it's dull and grey and it has no real design in it, I think we need to put the accent on, we need to have contests across the province to make sure that when we build something, even a road or a bridge, that there is some design in it and that it's something that we can be proud of and show the world.

I am very impressed that in this bill we will promote that. I am sure we have very smart architects and artists that will be able to help us in this endeavour.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener—Waterloo: two minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to thank the Minister of Infrastructure; the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington—welcome back; the member from Beaches—East York; and the Minister of Community Safety.

It is interesting because the infrastructure piece ties almost everything together in this province—sometimes literally. It pulls in the energy file. It pulls in the education file, as the member from Nepean—Carleton pointed out. It is an economic driver for the province of Ontario. It also connects the environment.

I think when the minister across from here says that we need to also plan for design, I think we also have to plan for safety, and safety has been an issue. A number of construction groups such as CDAO and affiliate groups—Ontario Road Builders' Association—believe that there are problems with the infrastructure project bundling and the recent use of alternative finance projects as administered by Infrastructure Ontario. I just want to say that we do share those concerns. It isn't just about the infrastructure piece looking pretty; it's about it actually being safe and functional and lasting.

I was just reviewing the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs—clearly I need to get a life—and there was a group that came to see us, and they made a really good point about the quality of the procurement process for the products that we are building our infrastructure with. There is room for improvement on that file as well.

The work is cut out for us on infrastructure. I know that the minister understands this. I'm not sure that Bill 141 is the be-all and end-all, but clearly, through the consultation that we have seen, we are committed to actually trying to make it better, as always.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I rise today to speak to Bill 141, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. The government has put this bill forward as an attempt to address the infrastructure investment need in Ontario. One of the things that I want to just pick out to speak about in this bill is the principles that are advanced in this proposed legislation.

The first one is the need for long-term planning for infrastructure. I don't disagree with that, but when I look at some of the obstacles and the kinds of things that go on in terms of planning—years and years and years before you can put a shovel in the ground—I'm wondering if that is a part of the need for long-term planning, because we need to have some efficiencies in that long-term planning as well.

The second principle is that infrastructure investments should be prioritized based on a specific list of criteria. It shocks me to think that that hasn't been done before, that it isn't just part of the annual kind of process that any ministry would normally go through.

Third is that we should know the current state of all government-owned infrastructure assets. Again, it's hard to believe that this, along with the list of criteria for prioritizing, wouldn't also be part and parcel of the regular business of the ministry.

Finally: that the government should publish, at a minimum, a 10-year plan setting out the anticipated infrastructure needs, with a strategy to meet those needs.

While those are all credible ideas, I just find it passing strange that it isn't something that we would assume a government would do.

Other speakers have noted about the publishing of a 10-year plan in terms of the cycle of a particular government, but when you look at some of the crumbling infrastructure that we have in this province, it makes me think that obviously these requirements, these principles, are in fact necessary.

The role of the private sector as a partner is certainly a very important part of any kind of infrastructure undertaking. I think of the impetus to job creation that infrastructure provides. I think of the competitive nature of a procurement policy set out so you get the best possible for the most efficient use of the money. There's also an opportunity to look at these infrastructure projects as a way of a building being built through investment in things like—the large investors, such as the public sector, like teachers, and those major funders who in fact are investing overseas when we could use the capital at home.

1740

There are a few other points that I think are important to look at. It might be an obvious opportunity for something like the pooled registered pension plans that, through my private member's bill, this government used or included in its last year's budget. These are innovative ways to look at this. Certainly there's no harm in strengthening that relationship between infrastructure and investment. I think, with more time, I would be able to talk about the importance of that relationship.

But when I read this bill and particularly look at its principles, it can't help but force me to look back over history. You know, 300 years ago kings figured out that to put up a king's highway was a direct economic benefit, that the opportunity to have goods and people able to travel, to expand commerce, was absolutely paramount to the economic well-being not only of the king and his government, but obviously his subjects as well.

And 150 years ago, we had the vision of our first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, to join the colonies with a railway, since obviously we'd moved on from the king's highways, but we do still have them. The vision of that kind of infrastructure was, again, something that he saw.

If we go to the last century, the 1950s, the 1960s, the 1970s, we see the 400-series highways having been built and the Toronto subway having been built, but if we look in the immediate past, we have a yawning hole. For decades, highways and roadways have been over capacity. In my riding, for instance, a road like Woodbine Avenue that's been the same for 50 years, exceeded its ability decades ago. It was over capacity.

In 1989, the 404 came to Newmarket; 25 years later, we still do not have an extension opened. Some 40 years ago, the corner of the property that my husband and I own had an MTO marker put on it as an indicator that the 404 might follow that route—that's 42 years ago. Almost the same age is the Bradford bypass.

So, when I just take a look at the kinds of investments and the timeline that we're looking at, I think that this notion that this government is going to find itself able to work within 10-year time frames would be quite astonishing, given the kind of problems that we have today.

I want to finish my time for remarks to quote from a letter I received today that just seemed to be appropriate for the bill we're discussing. This comes from the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario, which has just released a report, and it's entitled *Are Ontario's Municipal Class Environmental Assessments Worth the Added Time and Costs?* They go on to talk about the fact that relatively straightforward works such as road widenings, intersection improvements, bridge replacements, sewage system upgrades and even bicycle lanes are taking an unacceptably long time to go through the municipal class EA process. Unfortunately, they say it now takes 26 months on average to go through the process, compared to 19 months just a few years ago. In fact, both the complexity and cost to complete background studies have risen dramatically.

This letter goes on to explain some of the costs and the pitfalls and the way in which more efficient management of these projects could be done.

It strikes me that what this bill does is actually very little. It's a bill for planning. It isn't something that really requires legislation, but it sets out in legislative language something that should be simply the ministerial document on which they would operate as providing good government. I know that "good government" isn't a term we hear very often, but being able to provide our citizens with appropriate infrastructure instead of crumbling

infrastructure, instead of infrastructure that's just a dream for 40 years at a time—it seems amazing to me that this requires legislation. But we'll say that we will be supporting this bill. We will look forward to, hopefully, a more invigorated process of providing the infrastructure so badly needed in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Questions and comments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise again on Bill 141. I'm going to just take the opportunity to point to one aspect of the bill that I'd love some clarification on from the minister. It specifically looks at the appropriation of apprentices: that the government must require that a certain number of apprentices be employed in the construction or maintenance of infrastructure projects. The number would be prescribed in legislation. To me, that seems to counter the actual College of Trades, which sets mandatory standards for apprentices.

At the outset of the minister's discussion, he said that this bill intends to depoliticize infrastructure projects in the province of Ontario. But by the same token, now it will be the government that dictates how many apprentices will be allocated or required on various infrastructure projects. I need clarification on that, Minister, because I believe that the apprenticeship program across the province should be depoliticized and should be outside of the mandate of the ministry. I think that it is important for industry and labour and other groups to come to a data-driven, science-based dialogue around what apprenticeship ratios are, as well as the compulsory aspect to our trades. But I am concerned that this is just thrown in there to make it look like we're going to teach more apprentices using these vital government-funded infrastructure projects. We already will have to do that anyway under the College of Trades and the regulations provided. What is it? Which one is it? I hope that the minister can clarify that for me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'll buy my friend from Essex a coffee, because that's a longer conversation, but I appreciate the sincerity of his question.

I just want to deal with the member from Simcoe North, because I was a little confused by what she was saying. We, right now, are spending \$14 billion a year on infrastructure. The last time that happened was in the late 1960s under the Drew and Frost governments. She's quite correct; there was a drought. From 1973 to 2004, we spent less than a quarter of a per cent of GDP, or never more than \$3 billion.

Under the last years of the Harris and Eves government, the entire infrastructure spend in Ontario—entire—was \$1.4 billion. Today, we spend \$2.9 billion alone on highways and \$14 billion on infrastructure. The level of spending we've had for about the last six or seven years hasn't been seen since the Drew and Frost years. I would ask the member from Simcoe North, when she inquires—80% of the time, in that 40-year period when almost nothing was getting built, they were Conservative governments. To be fair to her, it wasn't just Conservative

governments; there were Liberal and NDP governments in that period of time that never got more than \$3 billion or \$4 billion. In a non-partisan way, the reason we have this problem is that 80% of what's built out there was built before 1973, and it's all getting old and falling apart now.

1750

In the 40 years since, there wasn't a party in power that spent more than 3%—\$1.4 billion. The federal government is still a problem. We will spend 14 billion new dollars on infrastructure. The federal government is going to spend 73 million net new dollars next year in Ontario. That's it. Provincial government, \$14 billion; municipalities, \$7 billion; the federal government, \$73 million.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure for me to rise and speak to the member from York-Simcoe's comments. I was reading this bill and there are some interesting sections to it in the infrastructure planning principles. Maybe some of these things the government has put in here to remind themselves that they should follow certain principles when they're dealing with this act.

One of them is, "Infrastructure planning and investment should take a long-term view"—I agree with that—"and decision-makers should take into account the needs of Ontarians by being mindful of, among other things, demographic and economic trends in Ontario." I would agree with that.

However, I think back to 2010—this was brought up by the member from Kitchener-Conestoga today—and the Premier's promise on GO train service in Kitchener-Waterloo. She promised that 10 years ago. She said that they were going to do this 10 years ago when she was Minister of Transportation—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ten years ago—

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm sorry, four years ago; 2010. Anyway, I thank you for that correction.

What I see in some of these sections here is a good base to start on. However, can we trust this government to even carry on with some of those things? That's what I see with this bill. The good intentions are there; however, as we see from the past record of this government, who knows if it's going to happen?

In section 5, it says "Infrastructure planning and investment should promote economic competitiveness"—the Green Energy Act has really failed on that.

Anyway, I would hope the minister responsible for this can—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to be able to stand up to Bill 141 and add another couple of minutes, following on the comments from the member from York-Simcoe.

The basic parameters of this—who would be against good planning? That's not the problem we're facing here. One of my Conservative colleagues mentioned the northern growth plan. That's a plan for 25 years for

northern Ontario. It was developed a few years ago. Whenever something good happens, we hear from the governing side, "That's the northern growth plan." I'm going to harp on this one today. When the ONTC was divested or tried to be divested of, although transportation was a big part of the northern growth plan, that was nowhere in the northern growth plan.

Part of this is that the people should be consulted; stakeholders should be consulted. Once again, it makes perfect sense—except when the ONTC announcement was made, who was consulted in northern Ontario? No one. That's not me saying that; that's the Auditor General.

Once again, it's great to be discussing this and, yes, we should work on plans, but at the end of the day, you have to follow through after you've done the consultation, not just talk about how great a plan this is going to be or how great a plan the last one was and then, "Oh, we're going to come up with a new plan just to look good"—

Interjection: Just because.

Mr. John Vanthof:—"just because."

That is the hurdle that we've all got to get over. We have to get over the planning stage and get to the doing stage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from York-Simcoe has two minutes.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you to the member from Essex, the Minister of Transportation, the members from Perth-Wellington and Timiskaming-Cochrane.

I think the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane summed it up when he suggested that, obviously, none of us is opposed to planning, but we have some concerns about the doing. When you look at decisions and prioritizing and things like that that have been done, it demonstrates the lack of being able to follow through.

The minister had a number of statistics on the actual amounts of money that have been used. We have to be very careful because over a period of time the value of that changes in terms of its percentage. Actually, when you look at the percentage over about four decades, it is all in a fairly small range. I have seen those percentages. I don't have them with me right now, but I just know that it's a fairly narrow frame that they were used in.

The point of many of the speakers is the fact that we desperately need planning, but it has to be based on a process where in fact everyone can see wisdom. When you look at the construction letter that I read from, the time it takes—and that's before the shovels are in the ground. When you look at some of the problems, like prompt payment, there's a lot of work to do on infrastructure in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being four minutes to 6, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1756.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonnell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
des services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle**

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Continued from back cover

Services for the developmentally disabled

Ms. Soo Wong.....	5928
Hon. Teresa Piruzza	5928

GO Transit

Mr. Michael Harris.....	5928
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5928

Pan Am Games

Mr. Paul Miller.....	5929
Hon. Charles Sousa	5929

Farm safety

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	5930
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5930
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5930

Transportation planning

Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	5930
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5930

Arts and cultural funding

Mr. Michael Prue.....	5931
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5931
Hon. Eric Hoskins	5931

Regional centres for the developmentally disabled

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5931
Hon. Ted McMeekin	5932

Correction of record

Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5932
------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	5932
Mr. Mike Colle.....	5932

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Environmental protection

Mr. John O'Toole.....	5932
-----------------------	------

Laura Hamilton

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	5932
-------------------------	------

Sickle Cell and Thalassemia Awareness Day

Mr. Mike Colle.....	5933
---------------------	------

Business climate

Mr. Randy Pettapiece.....	5933
---------------------------	------

Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority

Ms. Cindy Forster	5933
-------------------------	------

Tamil Heritage Month

Ms. Soo Wong.....	5933
-------------------	------

Agricultural colleges / Collèges agricoles

Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	5934
-----------------------	------

Travel insurance

Mr. Bob Delaney	5934
-----------------------	------

Elmira Maple Syrup Festival

Mr. Michael Harris.....	5934
-------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2014, Bill 174, Mr. Paul Miller / Loi de 2014 modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite, projet de loi 174, M. Paul Miller

First reading agreed to.....	5935
Mr. Paul Miller.....	5935

Sickle Cell and Thalassemia Care Ontario Act, 2014, Bill 175, Mr. Colle / Loi de 2014 sur Traitement des affections drépanocytaires et des thalassémies Ontario, projet de loi 175, M. Colle

First reading agreed to.....	5935
Mr. Mike Colle.....	5935

Better Business Climate Act, 2014, Bill 176, Mr. Hoskins / Loi de 2014 visant à instaurer un climat plus propice aux affaires, projet de loi 176, M. Hoskins

First reading agreed to.....	5935
------------------------------	------

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

La Francophonie

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5935
---------------------------------	------

Business climate

Hon. Eric Hoskins	5936
-------------------------	------

Dietitians Day

Hon. Deborah Matthews	5937
-----------------------------	------

La Francophonie

Mme Gila Martow	5938
-----------------------	------

Business climate

Mrs. Jane McKenna.....	5938
------------------------	------

Dietitians Day

Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	5939
-----------------------------	------

Business climate

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	5939
-------------------------	------

La Francophonie

Mme France Gélinas	5939
--------------------------	------

Dietitians Day	
Mme France Gélinas	5939
Visiteurs	
L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5940

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Hydro rates	
Mr. Randy Hillier	5940
Off-road vehicles	
Mr. John Vanthof	5940
Environmental protection	
Mr. John O'Toole	5940
Gasoline prices	
Mme France Gélinas	5940
Ontario Drug Benefit Program	
Mr. Rob E. Milligan	5941
Ontario Drug Benefit Program	
Mr. Taras Natyshak	5941
Physiotherapy services	
Mr. John O'Toole	5941
Tenant protection	
Ms. Catherine Fife	5941
Minimum wage	
Ms. Soo Wong	5942
Agricultural colleges	
Mr. Jim McDonell	5942
Charitable gaming	
Mr. John O'Toole	5942
Ontario College of Trades	
Mr. Jim McDonell	5942
Use of digital technologies	
Mr. Shafiq Qadri	5943

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2014, Bill 141, Mr. Murray / Loi de 2014 sur l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la prosperité, projet de loi 141, M. Murray	
Mr. Rob E. Milligan	5943
Mr. Taras Natyshak	5944
Hon. Glen R. Murray	5944
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5944
Mr. John Vanthof	5945
Mr. Rob E. Milligan	5945
Mr. Michael Prue	5946
Hon. Glen R. Murray	5948
Mr. John Yakabuski	5949
Ms. Catherine Fife	5949
Mr. Shafiq Qadri	5949
Mr. Michael Prue	5950
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5950
Mr. John Vanthof	5952
Hon. Jeff Leal	5952
Mr. John O'Toole	5952
Mr. Taras Natyshak	5953
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5953
Ms. Catherine Fife	5953
Hon. Glen R. Murray	5955
Mr. Randy Hillier	5955
Mr. Michael Prue	5955
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5956
Ms. Catherine Fife	5956
Mrs. Julia Munro	5956
Mr. Taras Natyshak	5957
Hon. Glen R. Murray	5957
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	5958
Mr. John Vanthof	5958
Mrs. Julia Munro	5958
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5958

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 19 March 2014 / Mercredi 19 mars 2014

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Complying with International Trade Obligations Act, 2014, Bill 153, Mr. Chiarelli / Loi de 2014 de conformité aux obligations commerciales internationales, projet de loi 153, M. Chiarelli

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5909
Mr. Rosario Marchese	5912
Mr. Bob Delaney	5912
Mr. John Yakabuski	5912
Ms. Peggy Sattler	5913
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5913
Mr. Peter Tabuns	5913
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5918

Correction of record

Mr. Steve Clark	5918
-----------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Michael Harris	5918
Mme France Gélinas	5918
M. Grant Crack	5918
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	5918
Mr. Percy Hatfield	5918
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5918
Mr. Jeff Yurek	5918
Ms. Andrea Horwath	5918
Mr. Bill Mauro	5919
Mr. Rick Nicholls	5919
Mr. Paul Miller	5919
Hon. Linda Jeffrey	5919
Mr. Toby Barrett	5919
Ms. Cindy Forster	5919
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5919
Mr. Jim McDonell	5919
Hon. Ted McMeekin	5919
Mr. Monte McNaughton	5919
Hon. Michael Gravelle	5919
Mr. Jim Wilson	5919
Hon. Liz Sandals	5919
Mr. Frank Klees	5919
Mrs. Laura Albanese	5920
Mr. Phil McNeely	5920
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	5920

Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5920
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5920
Ms. Helena Jaczek	5920
Hon. Mario Sergio	5920
Ms. Soo Wong	5920
Hon. James J. Bradley	5920
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	5920
Ms. Mitzie Hunter	5920
Mr. Mike Colle	5920
Hon. Charles Sousa	5920

Fire drill

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	5920
-------------------------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Ontario budget

Mr. Tim Hudak	5921
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5921

Job creation

Mr. Tim Hudak	5922
Hon. Charles Sousa	5922

Taxation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5923
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5923

Job creation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5923
Hon. Eric Hoskins	5924

Agricultural colleges

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5924
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5924
Hon. Brad Duguid	5925

GO Transit

Ms. Catherine Fife	5925
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5925

Student achievement

Ms. Dipika Damerla	5926
Hon. Liz Sandals	5926

School extracurricular activities

Mr. Rob Leone	5926
Hon. Liz Sandals	5927

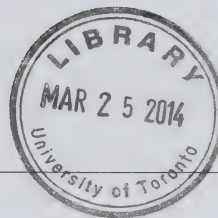
Nurses

Mme France Gélinas	5927
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5927

Continued on inside back cover

CA26N
X1
-D23

Government
Publications



No. 115

N° 115

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 20 March 2014

Jeudi 20 mars 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 20 March 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 20 mars 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO IMMIGRATION ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 SUR L'IMMIGRATION EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 4, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 161, Loi portant sur l'immigration en Ontario et apportant une modification connexe à la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je veux juste souhaiter à tout le monde une belle Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

To the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Merci, monsieur le Président. It's a pleasure to stand here today and to address Bill 161, the Ontario Immigration Act, as it's known. I, like my colleagues, am willing to support this bill because I believe that there is merit in what's trying to be accomplished. I do not believe, though, that we can in good conscience push through this new legislation while at the same time ignoring the source of the problem here in Ontario. If we want to increase immigration to Ontario, then we must improve the opportunities that are available here to new immigrants. The truth is that over the past 10 years, this McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government has done an excellent job at driving investment, talent and good jobs out of our province.

Before this Liberal government took office, Ontario was the number one destination for newcomers to come to Canada. This can be seen when you look at Toronto and the GTA, where over half of all residents were born outside of our borders. When these individuals moved to Ontario, it was the land of opportunity. The unskilled workers flocked here from all corners of the globe to find

good jobs, start families and live the kinds of lives they've always dreamed of. Today, potential immigrants look at Ontario, and they see a poor economic climate created by the McGuinty-Wynne government. They see the high debt, with the deficit growing larger by the hour, the high taxes, the exorbitant cost of electricity, and they say, "No, thanks." Instead, they move to Saskatchewan, or Alberta or Manitoba, where the economic climate is friendlier and they can see themselves obtaining a good job and creating the kind of life they want for themselves and their families.

We hear stories every day about our born-and-raised Ontarians, people that grew up here, were educated here, and are now finally at the age where they can work. These talented young individuals are heading for the border, because they can't find any opportunities to pursue what they love to do here at home.

I've listened to the stories of young teachers from my riding being forced to find jobs abroad, in Asia, Europe or Australia, so they can finally teach and find fulfilment doing the work they love. I've heard the stories of some of our province's brightest young engineering students being wooed by the overwhelming opportunities available to them working for American technology companies in Silicon Valley or in New York City. If we can't even hold on to the skilled workers we have at home, individuals who have built lives and relationships in the communities where they were raised, then how can we possibly expect the economic environment to be inviting or attractive to newcomers?

It's not only our economic climate that acts as a deterrent to immigrants. If they take one brief look at our education system here in Ontario, they will see the McGuinty-Wynne system that has produced steadily declining math scores over the past 10 years, a system that has allowed the tension over the demands of union bosses to take priority over the development and progress of our students.

This Liberal government is pumping \$8 billion more a year into education while we have 300,000 fewer students enrolled, and yet we are constantly seeing worsening results. Even our post-secondary schools are struggling, as seen by the recent announcement of campus closures at the University of Guelph. Clearly, something is wrong here, and any immigrant raising a family, or looking to raise a family, would be able to deduce that, and it would certainly cause them to think twice before deciding to relocate here.

Every day, here in Ontario, we're spending \$1.8 million an hour more than we take in as revenue. The debt incurred here by the McGuinty-Wynne government is

monumental, and the most troubling part of all is the utter lack of results yielded from a more than \$264-billion debt.

Our education system has produced declining test scores. Our health care system is underperforming and, quite frankly, unprepared to handle the influx of medicinal needs required by the aging baby boomer population. Our infrastructure and highway systems in Toronto and the GTA are completely antiquated, face constant gridlock and are producing a \$6-billion loss to productivity annually.

Wynne's Liberal government is happy to rack up billions of dollars in debt through the creation of useless bureaucracy while allowing our public assets to fall into disrepair. This government's reckless use of taxpayers' money is simply unacceptable. Until the day that the Liberals finally decide to rein in their spending and shift focus to reduce the deficit and balance the budget, we're never going to be able to effectively advertise ourselves as a desirable location for newcomers to Canada.

After this week's realization that this government is not telling the public the whole truth when it comes to the state of our province's provincial finances, knowing full well that they are nowhere near on track to balancing the budget by 2018, it's clear that they're sending the province down the wrong path and have no intention of a course correction. A lack of confidence in our economy—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask you to withdraw, because you can't use that language.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The lack of confidence in our economy is evidenced through the federal government's low allocation of spots dedicated to Ontario in the provincial nominee program. Only 2,500 positions are allocated to Ontario—half of what Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba get.

The Liberals' refusal to focus on jobs and the economy is causing us to lose access to a large number of skilled workers who could fill existing jobs in our province, jobs that cannot be filled from within. Statistics Canada predicts that by as early as 2020, which is really just around the corner, we could be facing a situation where we see more deaths than births within our communities.

Ontario's aging baby boomer population, coupled with a rapidly declining birth rate, makes it a fact that future population growth must be driven by immigration. Despite this fact, the Liberal government has sat on the sidelines doing nothing while watching our national share of immigrants slip rapidly. In fact, last year, Ontario managed to reach its second-lowest level of immigration in recorded history.

The McGuinty-Wynne government has mismanaged immigration policy for over a decade, when they could have been making strides and working with the federal government to ensure Ontario's economic needs would be met. The only reason Premier Wynne's government has decided to focus on immigration now with Bill 161 is

because the federal government has forced their hand with the introduction of the 2015 expression-of-interest policy. The federal government is strongly encouraging provinces to develop a system that will allow them to participate in this program come 2015.

0910

Unlike the Liberals, my colleagues and I in the PC caucus understand that immigrants act as the much-needed fuel for our provincial economy and, as such, we've ensured that a successful immigration policy plays a critical role in our jobs plan. We want to work aggressively with the federal government to take full advantage of their programs for immigrants with strong skills. The federal government's low allotment of slots for Ontario through the provincial nominee program is not the only challenge we face, but also this government's inability to properly allocate these jobs to fit within our province's needs. This means that after a few years these new members of our communities head for our province's borders in search of work that's more meaningful to them, work that is not accessible to them here in Ontario.

The McGuinty-Wynne government has a proven track record of extremely poor retention when it comes to keeping our new residents in Ontario. My colleagues and I in the PC caucus realize that we must pay attention to not only what will attract new immigrants to Ontario, but also to what will help to keep them here.

My colleague Todd Smith from—I forget Todd's riding—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Prince Edward—Hastings—in case you got up, Mr. Speaker—has spoken of stories told to him by doctors who came to Ontario and felt instantly as if they had become a zero. We've all heard these stories, individuals reaching our province full of hope and potential, only to have their expectations crushed by our lack of foreign credential recognition for training gained abroad.

It is well known that here in Ontario we are in need of more skilled labour: doctors, nurses, engineers and architects. Yet, this Liberal government has imposed artificial barriers, which will prevent these skilled professionals from using their skills.

New immigrants are smart people and they put a lot of research into a place before they decide to move. When they look at Ontario, they see a region that is facing the highest unemployment rate in Canada. How can we expect these educated individuals to willingly choose to move to a region where over one million people are waking up every day without a job? This is why I and my colleagues are hesitant when we see this bill. It effectively ignores the largest problem plaguing Ontario today. Without first developing and instituting a jobs plan, this bill will never have its desired effect. My caucus knows this and the federal government knows this, as seen through their low allotment of spots for Ontario within the provincial nominee program. The only ones who have yet to grasp this concept is Premier Wynne's Liberal government. It is as if the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals don't

even realize how desperate a situation they've gotten this province into.

We must first create an environment where businesses want to invest in our province and create new jobs. A successful business sector is essential in attracting newcomers who want to build their lives here and will never be able to attract new businesses and investors unless Premier Wynne opens her eyes and realizes that drastic measures are needed to get Ontario's financial situation under control.

The PC caucus has constantly pushed the importance of a jobs plan for Ontario. In December, thanks to our programming motion, we saw the swift passage of several social-type bills that the government and, in fact, all parties were willing to agree to. My intent in moving the motion was to shift the focus of the Legislature on to the economy, creating space for a jobs plan to emerge. It's now nearing the end of March, and we have yet to see an economic plan from this government.

Now, this week, we come to find out that the Liberals and NDP have put their own political interests first yet again by pushing off the budget date. It shows yet again that they care more about keeping their jobs than creating new ones for the million people in Ontario who are out of work. Municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals can't plan their budgets until the province has put forward its own. This weakens public services and ultimately puts everyone at risk. This is why it has been a long-standing practice of this government, up until last year, to table a provincial budget before the end of the fiscal year.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd kindly ask the member opposite to stick to Bill 161.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): If the member would refer to the bill.

Mr. Jim Wilson: If you had a bloody jobs plan, maybe Bill 161 would be a more effective piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker. I must have touched a nerve over there.

So the Ontario PC caucus is willing to put the people of Ontario first. We're willing to put our own jobs on the line and face the electorate in order to get a jobs plan on the table for Ontario's unemployed youth, women and men. And you'll see that on Monday when we debate our opposition day motion, which calls on the government to bring forward a jobs plan or adopt our leader's, Tim Hudak's, million-jobs plan or bring forward your budget and show us that it is truly a jobs plan by March 31, as you know you should. Now we hear they're going to push it back to May. I guess they want to put off that debate as long as possible. The debate is about jobs, and I don't care what piece of legislation you bring forward here; it's about jobs, jobs, jobs.

So again, if the Liberals don't have a plan of their own, they shouldn't be in government and they should face the electorate and they should put a confidence vote to this House. Yesterday, we tabled a motion that would, as I mentioned, force the government to table their budget by March 31. I suspect the NDP will once again prop up—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order, the member—

Hon. Michael Coteau: For the last minute, all I've heard is, "The budget, the budget, the budget." I think he needs to focus on Bill 161. We're talking about the Ontario Immigration Act. I'd ask the Speaker to gently remind the member opposite to stick to that topic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you; I've been listening very carefully. The member for Simcoe—Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad you're on my side.

My whole theme, I say to the Minister of Immigration—I'm sorry, I have a bad cold this morning, so maybe it's not coming across clearly enough. You can have all the immigration law you want, but newcomers don't want to come here because you've created such a crappy environment. Okay, do you understand it? The budget has an awful lot to do with that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the member speak to the Chair, please?

Mr. Jim Wilson: There are five main elements to our million-jobs plan, which would help attract immigration to the province and create jobs. First, the bill will produce more jobs and increase take-home pay through lower taxes and less debt. It's common sense: Well-run businesses invest in well-run provinces. Immigrants will want to come to well-run provinces and help us with our skills shortage. Our plan is to balance the budget quickly, using tools like an across-the-board government wage freeze that would save \$2 billion per year and reduce taxes on employers so they can start to hire again.

Second, our plan will ensure affordable energy that will create jobs, not eliminate them, ending the chaos in Ontario's energy sector and returning to reliable and affordable energy rates that businesses can depend on. We aim to provide cost-efficient and reliable energy. Our plan will end expensive subsidies for wind and solar power projects that drive up costs and punish both manufacturers and Ontario families with high electricity bills. I mean, who wants to come to a province when we now have the highest electricity rates in almost all of North America and certainly in all of Canada? I remind you, those rates—in 2003, it was 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. That was the average daily electricity rate in the province for consumers. Today it's as high as 12.4 cents per kilowatt hour. It's shocking, and it's something that's at the heart of this issue, and that's jobs for new Canadians and new Ontarians.

Third, the Million Jobs Act will train more skilled workers to meet the huge demand in trades and help young people find good jobs. Colleges Ontario estimates

there are 46% fewer tradespeople per capita in Ontario compared to the rest of the Canada. That's a problem. So we will change the apprentice-to-journeyman ratio to 1 to 1 and abolish the job-killing College of Trades and the trades tax, which is nothing but a tax on workers and a costly bureaucracy that gets in the way of new job opportunities.

Fourth, we will increase trade with our neighbours. It will put more made-in-Ontario products on more shelves. As some of you may know, internal trade barriers cost the Canadian economy \$50 billion a year. We want to make sure the things Ontario workers make can reach as many customers as possible and, again, create jobs for those people that would want to come to Ontario and live a good life. Our plan also requires that the government of Ontario begin negotiations to join the economic partnership of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

0920

Finally, fifth, we want to end the bureaucratic run-around that inhibits jobs creation. We will lift the heavy hand of government and reduce the 300,000 regulations in Ontario that bog businesses in paperwork. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, complying with Ontario's regulatory requirements costs businesses approximately \$11 billion a year. And it wipes out opportunities for people who want to come to Ontario, and for those who were born and raised in Ontario, to have a good life and a good job. We aim to reduce the regulatory burden in Ontario by a minimum of one third for three years. Now, doesn't that sound like a more conducive environment that people would want to come to, a place where a newcomer to our country would have a chance at a good job and a good life?

For a decade, this government has been driving up debt with billion-dollar scandals and multi-billion-dollar deficits year after year, working to drive out all investment and job opportunity within this great province. We saw it with Heinz in Leamington; with GM in Windsor, Oshawa and St. Catharines; with ExxonMobil Chemical Films in Belleville; with Saputo Dairy in Brampton; and with Alcoa in Collingwood. The list goes on and on. These companies have left—they've closed their doors—and we've lost the opportunity for employment in those locations.

Ontario's unemployment rate has been stubbornly high, above the national average, for far too long; I think it's 84 months now that we've been above the national average. We used to be the economic engine that drove this country; now we're the caboose. That high unemployment rate serves as a constant reminder that this Liberal government is doing something seriously wrong. We need to create an environment where investors want to create jobs, not one that makes them want to close up shop, as thousands of individuals who were put out of work by factory closings across Ontario know all too well.

The foundation of this great country was built off the hard work of immigrants from all corners of the world. It's the fuel for our economy, and the future of our prov-

ince certainly rests on our ability to continue to attract these individuals in years to come. The history of our country and this province, no matter how long ago you came here—I know my family came here over 250 years ago. We were actually pre-potato-famine Irish immigrants. A whole pile of cousins more came over when they couldn't eat anything in Ireland, too, but we've been here a long time and I still consider us to be immigrants. We still consider ourselves—our family does—and we often talk about it.

We've been privileged: Many of my siblings, brothers and sisters, have married into families that have come from all over the globe. I have relatives from five nationalities different from my own. I have relatives through marriage, in-laws. What a beautiful place Ontario has been, and what a great place it could be in the future if only the government would concentrate more on creating jobs and opportunities for families so that newcomers would want to come here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to be able to rise in this House and speak in response to the member from Simcoe-Grey, but more importantly, to speak about the bill, which is all about immigration.

As the son of immigrants, as many of us are—I'm happily married to someone who emigrated from Holland almost 30 years ago—immigrants have made a huge difference in this province, and they can continue to make a huge difference in this province. They come here, and they want to come here because, as our forefathers did, they want to improve their lives. And because they want to improve their lives, they also improve our province, because they work hard.

They want to build a heritage, they want to build a future for their children and they want to help build Ontario. I think that one of the most important discussions we can have in this House is how to help them integrate and how to make it easier for them to come to Ontario. Yes, Ontario is experiencing some big problems; I think that's one of the things we have to discuss here. But specifically in my region, the people who have come to my region recently are calling for us to take some measures—do something—to allow more people to come to the north. The north offers huge opportunities for people not only from Ontario but from other places.

I get calls very regularly from people who have come to northern Ontario lately with suggestions about how to make it easier for their friends and family to come, because they have things to contribute to this province. I think this discussion and this bill are at least a start on how we can start that process to bring more people to Ontario and let them contribute, as have immigrants in waves past.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I take great pride to speak to Bill 161 and respond to the member from Simcoe-Grey. He said a lot of things, and he made many points. Out of

all of those points, I probably agree with one point he made, and that was that we all have an immigrant past here in the province of Ontario, outside of our aboriginal population.

There's a different voice that I hear when I'm out of this building, in comparison to what I hear on that side of the House. The Conservative Party of Ontario continuously puts Ontario down. I think the member from Simcoe—Grey said Ontario was once beautiful. He says that Ontario is no longer the number one destination for newcomers.

The fact is that Ontario is a beautiful province, and it's the most beautiful province in this country, number one. Number two, the province remains the number one choice of destination for newcomers in the country of Canada. If you take all of the provinces west of Ontario and you combine the immigration for all of those provinces—Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia—Ontario attracts more people than all of those provinces combined.

Interjection.

Hon. Michael Coteau: We are the greatest province in Canada, and I'm glad that one of the members opposite still believes that Ontario is the greatest place to be in Canada.

Let's stand up for Ontario once in a while. Let's not take a negative tone when we speak about Ontario. Immigrants continue to come to this province because it is a wonderful place and there are great opportunities.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, come to order.

Hon. Michael Coteau: In fact, Mr. Speaker, we heard reference that Ontario is no longer the economic engine of this country. I believe it is—what is it?—40% of the GDP of this country, and in fact the GTA is 22% of the entire economic engine of the country.

Stop putting Ontario down. Stand up for Ontario. We want a Progressive Conservative Party that believes in this province, and if you don't believe in it, well, go west.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I came here this morning in quite a good mood. I came specifically to hear the member from Simcoe—Grey, and I think he summarized the bill. He started by saying, "We support the bill." Then he went on to explain the risk to the future of Ontario because of no jobs plan. They aren't presenting a budget.

He said in one passionate statement—and I'm sure he's settled down now, but it did upset the minister—"Jobs, jobs, jobs." Really, what new Canadians would want is a job and an opportunity, as we all would for our children as well as everyone in the province.

There has been quite a change with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration this morning, if I could. I say this with the deepest regard and respect. The minister, this morning, in his very fancy limousine, pulled up

beside me on University Avenue—this morning—and kindly stopped and said, "Mr. O'Toole, get in the car." I thought it was the police. Anyway, I thank him for that publicly. That was a very kind gesture.

I don't know what has changed since then. Then he went on this tirade this morning. I would encourage you to keep that positive attitude you had when you stopped in a kind gesture this morning and picked me up on University Avenue. I do mean that quite sincerely, because he is kind-hearted, and I think that shows up in the bill here.

But in fairness, the member from Simcoe—Grey was passionately making the point that Ontario is the largest province. It used to be the leader in Canada; now we're not.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: No. We have the largest economy because we have the largest population: 13 million people.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Transportation, come to order, please.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would say this to you: You have provinces like Alberta, provinces like Saskatchewan, that are one tenth of the size of Ontario and are more prosperous economies that are driving Canada.

There's a lot to be said about immigration, but jobs is an important part of it.

0930

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will add my voice to Bill 161, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991. I want to give the example of Dr. Carolina Bohrer. Carolina is a 32-year-old critical care pediatrician. She's a newcomer to my riding. Dr. Bohrer lives in Azilda, in Nickel Belt. She is from Brazil. She trained in Brazil but did her residency in Alberta, in Canada. She wrote and passed all of her exams. She has now paid close to \$10,000 to make sure that she had passed all of the Canadian exams, and she passed all of them with flying colours.

She has been approached by people at SickKids in order to get a fellowship, because her skills are so needed in Ontario, but right now, she can't even get an academic licence. The chief of pediatrics at Health Sciences North, the hospital in Sudbury, Dr. Murray, can't wait to add her to the team of pediatricians who offer services to the children of the northeast, but he can't.

She started this process of being recognized as a pediatrician here in Ontario a year and a half ago. Actually, in May, it will be two years ago that she started this process. She has done her elective in Canada. She has passed every exam that you put in front of her, with flying colours. People in Canada know her, want her. The kids in Sudbury need her skills. But the process is so slow that she is still not allowed to practise.

I support the part of the bill that says we will require that a college of a health profession make registration

decisions within a reasonable time period. Two years is too long.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Simcoe–Grey, you have two minutes.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I thank those members who responded to my comments.

The point I was trying to make, and I think I did make quite clearly on many occasions, because it got under the skin of the party opposite, the Liberals, is that you can have all the new immigration law you want, but if Ontario isn't the leader once again at creating jobs and making sure they're good jobs, not only for people who were born and raised here and have roots in our communities but for those who want to come and grow roots in our communities—I would think that the provincial nominee program itself, and the allocation of only 25,000 slots this year, and the fact that last year, Ontario had the second-lowest immigration in recorded history, is an indication, or should be an indication, I say to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, that something's terribly wrong, that something's going wrong.

I didn't make those facts up, and I don't think any politician in Ottawa or here made them up. I think they're just facts that come from Stats Canada, and I don't think Stats Canada has been overly politicized by any party over the last few decades, so I trust them. I trust your own statistics here in the province of Ontario, accumulated by the bureaucrats.

But I appreciate your comments. And, yes, we all want to brag about Ontario, and we certainly do that when we talk to people. But inside this place, we need to get our facts straight, and we need to work every day to create the opportunities for new Canadians and those who are here and raised here.

The fact of the matter is, I do want to say to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, because we all agree that he's a good guy, that if you're going to continue to kidnap the member from Durham just to try and get him on your side of the House—naughty, naughty, naughty, and don't do it again.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a pleasure to rise this morning in this House, as MPP for London West, to offer some comments on Bill 161, the Ontario Immigration Act.

This legislation is a high priority for me personally, as a former policy researcher who led several research studies on post-secondary bridging programs for internationally educated health professions.

It's also a priority for the people I represent in London West, many of whom face barriers when they arrive in Ontario as immigrants or refugees.

Finally, it is a huge priority for my community because of recent data from the 2011 National Household Survey showing that London is less diverse than the rest of Ontario, with an immigrant population of only 19% compared to a provincial average of almost 29%. We need and want to do more to welcome immigrants. But as a municipality, we are limited in the tools available to us without provincial leadership.

The proportion of immigrants to Canada who come to Ontario is declining, from 60% in 2001 to 40% in 2011, which is Ontario's lowest share in at least 30 years. In my community of London, Ontario, this trend is even more pronounced. So this bill is a welcome and long-overdue initiative. It's a step in the right direction, offering the promise of significant progress on some important issues, which is why New Democrats are pleased to support it.

Unfortunately, however, it does not do much more than offer the promise of change. Because it relies on the approval of the federal government, the bill would not necessarily be successful in achieving some of its most important goals, such as increasing the number of new immigrants to Ontario; for example, to increase our provincial nominee program to 5,000 in 2014. Most of all, the bill does not address some of the real and fundamental challenges facing newcomers to our province. It does not address the long-standing problems of ensuring that highly trained immigrants are able to work in their professional fields and that they are able to get employment that matches their experience and earn incomes that are in line with those of other Ontarians. It does not deal with settlement issues, broadly defined, which include housing, education, health care and a myriad of other issues. It does not address issues that affect non-economic-class immigrants, including their entry into the labour force. While the bill recognizes municipalities and employers as important partners, it is silent on the role of the community-based non-profit immigrant and refugee-serving sector, which, as we know, makes a huge contribution to the settlement of immigrants in our communities.

So what are the main provisions of the bill? First, it provides authority for Ontario to establish and govern immigrant selection programs for both temporary and permanent immigrants. It also allows the government to set immigration targets designed to help the province meet economic and labour market needs for the number of immigrants allowed into the province by Ontario's selection programs. We know, from demographic analysis, that we need to more than double the proportion of immigrants we are bringing in just to offset the decline in our labour market as a result of population aging. Over the same period, the profile of the immigrants who are arriving is also changing. We've seen a decline in the proportion of economic-class immigrants, from 64% in 2001 to 52% in 2011, which is lower than any other province and much lower than the provincial average of 71% of immigrants. Bill 161 is specifically intended to increase the class of economic immigrants; that is, those highly educated newcomers who were often professionals in their countries of origin. But there is a catch, and it's a big one. Because any new programs would have to be approved by the federal government and there is no guarantee that this will happen, there is no assurance that the federal government will agree with this legislation.

Second, the bill enables the minister to conduct research, organize educational and training programs and

appoint committees on immigration-related issues. This is a vital aspect of the bill because we need to understand what programs are working, how they are working and how we can improve.

Third, the bill allows the minister to establish registries for both employers and recruiters who are interested in participating in Ontario selection programs under the act.

Fourth, the bill sets out a number of provisions related to process, including processes to monitor and detect possible contraventions of the act in order to prevent immigration fraud and protect program integrity, and permitting the minister to collect, use and disclose personal information in order to carry out these functions.

The bill aligns requirements under the Regulated Health Professions Act with those in the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act in terms of timelines in decision-making and access to records, which was a direction from the Office of the Fairness Commissioner.

0940

It creates a compliance and enforcement regime, including inspection, investigation powers, offences, and penalties for both individuals and organizations. It permits applicants to request an internal review regarding a decision made, and it allows for regulation-making authority in areas such as program administration, program eligibility, compliance, internal review and the payment of fines.

Finally, the bill allows the minister to enter into agreements with the federal government, other provinces and municipalities.

I now want to move to talk a bit about the implications of this bill for my community of London, Ontario, as well as share with this House some of the findings from the research I was involved in.

I mentioned earlier that London has a lower proportion of immigrants than many other large Ontario cities, but it is often a first destination for newcomers from Latin America because of our large and established Spanish-speaking community. We are also a key secondary settlement location, and we are the number one destination for refugee claimants in Ontario.

One of the issues we are facing in attracting newcomers to our community is the struggling economy in southwestern Ontario, and persistently high unemployment that causes many immigrants to leave because they cannot find work.

The 2011 census showed that about 12,000 immigrants reported moving to the London area between 2006 and 2011, but almost exactly the same number moved out, so the net change between 2006 and 2011 was only 235 immigrants.

It's hard to attract skilled newcomers when all you can offer are opportunities to clean houses or drive taxis or deliver pizza; when their only option is to work survival jobs that put them further behind as they lose their skills and are unable to afford either the time or the money to go to school for bridge training. It becomes a vicious

circle. In many ways, it is unconscionable, what we do to newcomers when we allow them in but deny them opportunities to work.

In my previous life as a policy researcher, before I was elected, I conducted surveys, focus groups and interviews with internationally educated health professionals who had arrived in this province with finely-honed professional skills developed through education and training in their countries of origin, and often with many years of professional experience as practitioners.

Too many times, they discovered after arrival that they would have to go through a complicated and costly series of steps in order to work in their profession. For example, the credential process for an internationally educated physiotherapist can take up to a year or more, at a cost of \$4,000 for credential review, prior learning assessment, and the written component of the Physiotherapy Competency Exam.

We know that internationally educated health professionals play an increasingly important role in addressing health human resource pressures, and are also vital in providing culturally competent care to Canada's diverse population.

But there are significant challenges that IEHPs—internationally educated health professions—face in transitioning to Canadian practice, including the validation of education credentials, achieving language fluency, obtaining clinical experience, passing certification exams, and learning the culture of the Canadian health care system.

Despite a number of recent projects undertaken by federal and provincial governments, the failure rate of internationally educated health professionals on national exams in many professions is significantly higher than the Canadian average, and obtaining clinical experience that will be recognized by regulatory bodies and employers remains a barrier.

The research project I was involved in made some important recommendations, including the need for sustained funding for flexible, affordable and accessible bridging and employment integration programs and, in particular, more and better pre-immigration information about the process to become licensed to practise and to register in their professions.

During the by-election last summer, I spent considerable time talking to internationally educated professionals in my riding. Many were living in low-income housing, either unemployed or working in precarious survival jobs to support their families while waiting for their credentials to be recognized. Some were trying to gather the financial resources necessary and arrange child care so that they could enrol in a bridging program to address gaps that were preventing them from entering professional practice.

Just a few months ago, in December, I attended an immigration round table for professionals that was organized by the London Multicultural Club. Unfortunately, the minister was invited but was unable to attend that event. If he had, he would have heard first-hand some of

the challenges and barriers faced by internationally educated newcomers in my community. I want to share with this House some of those stories that were told to us at that round table, and other stories that I've heard from my constituents in London West.

First, I want to read from a letter I received from an internationally trained physician in my riding which captures directly the frustration and the anxiety experienced by skilled newcomers:

"I am an internationally trained physician from Iraq and I have been living in London, Ontario, as a landed immigrant since 2009. Since my arrival I have completed my Licentiate of the Medical Council of Canada exams and earned my LMCC certificate with excellent scores.... I have also [been] volunteering and doing observerships in multiple places to build up my CV, but unfortunately, after all the hard work, I was never offered a job in the field of health care, let alone medicine. Now, after all this time and hard work, I feel that I am back to square one with no job.... Why is an enthusiastic, passionate ... and someone who has completed all the requirements of the Licentiate being shunned from the system? When I arrived to Canada I was 26 and now I am 31, and I don't feel that I can live on with uncertainty for eternity."

Another doctor, a foreign-trained ob-gyn, came to my office and questioned why CIC would credit perspective immigrants with points scoring them higher for immigration when they can't find work in their respective fields. This doctor also obtained her Licentiate of the Medical Council of Canada. She passed the national exam as well as the membership exam with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. But while looking to work in her field, she was continually told that she needed to complete a Canadian residency, which she said she would do, but she cannot get into a medical school because of the limited spaces for huge numbers of applicants. She is understandably upset and emotional because she wants to practise her specialty and had expectations that she would be able to do that when she came to Canada. She feels she was misinformed and that our system makes it very difficult to get accurate information. At this point, she is telling others considering immigrating not to come because they will not be able to work in their chosen profession.

We need to do a better job of informing people before they come to Canada of what exactly will be required of them in order for them to practise their profession. We have people landing here thinking that they will walk into a job because they have scored high in points. There's a big disconnect between what immigrants are told pre-arrival and the reality they experience when they arrive. It can be very expensive and confusing for immigrants, and stressful and destabilizing for the whole settlement process.

Another issue—a painful issue for MPPs to deal with—are cases of neonatal mothers without status in Canada and no access to health care. In my office, I talked with a Canadian man whose partner had come to Canada with a working holiday visa that gave her health

care benefits. It was limited to a one-year term that was neither extendable nor renewable. She became pregnant but her health benefits ran out when her visa expired, which made her a person without status in Canada. One month after the birth of her baby, the child died. Although the baby was covered by OHIP as a Canadian citizen, the mother was not, and the cost of the birth and the funeral was \$30,000.

The second case was a woman whose visa had expired in mid-September but she was expecting in October. After a difficult birth, she needed hospitalization for four days, and ended up with a bill of \$15,000.

We are not taking good care of young Ontarians when we don't take good care of their mothers. We are not helping their families get off to a good start in life when we saddle their parents with tens of thousands of dollars in medical bills.

0950

I have to say that it is indeed heartening to finally see some action being taken on immigration issues by this Liberal government after more than a decade in office, including, I might add, three majority governments when they would have been in a position to move forward and show leadership on the issues identified in Bill 161.

These issues did not just appear this year or last year. These are issues that we have been hearing about for many, many years in our communities. By refusing to take action, by not addressing these issues until the waning days of a minority government—think of the consequences to Ontario, not just the economic costs of having highly qualified professionals unable to utilize their skills and contribute to our economy, and not just the loss of talent in our workforce in the face of widespread skill shortages, but the human costs, the anguish and loss of dignity and purpose experienced by people who are no longer able to practise their career and are made to feel like an underclass when they arrive in Ontario, and the social loss to our communities without the rich diversity of ideas, culture and experience that newcomers bring.

The Liberal government has no excuse for not acting sooner. After more than 10 years in power, it is shameful that this is the first piece of legislation that is concerned with immigration.

In his leadoff speech, my colleague the member for Beaches–East York shared with us a troubling tale of the years of missed opportunities for this province to follow the lead of Quebec and create our own immigration system. These doors are now closed, and this is no longer a possibility. Ontario no longer has room to fashion our own immigration policies that meet our needs as a province. We must take direction from the federal government.

In closing, I say again that we are pleased to see this legislation come forward. We are prepared to support this legislation. But we also want to see some action taken on so many other issues related to the arrival of newcomers in our community.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 161. I want to begin my remarks about some of the data that I want to make sure—the opposition, especially the opposition party, commented earlier, from the member from Simcoe—Grey.

In 2010, 93% of those immigrants who landed in Ontario in the past five years, meaning from 2006 to 2010, remained in Ontario. That's 93%, Mr. Speaker. Another 89% of those landing between 2001 and 2005 were also still in Ontario. These are the highest immigration retention rates among all the provinces. The next-highest retention rate was in Alberta, with 92% retention rates from 2006 to 2010. The lowest retention rate was in PEI, with only a 37% retention rate. I want to make sure that the opposition hears these facts.

I'm very pleased to hear the comments made by my colleague from London West about the plight of the refugees. I totally hear that. As a former public health nurse, I saw them every day when I visited their homes, and when I was a trustee for the Toronto District School Board. Their needs are unique—and especially that Ontario is a welcoming and diverse and respectful province.

The other piece is, the proposed Bill 161 is the beginning, not the end. It is also the first step for Ontario so that we can chart our own course when it comes to attracting skilled immigrants.

I hear the concerns from my colleague from Nickel Belt and, as I said earlier, the member from London West. The challenge for new Canadians is not just the weather; we just experienced that. Certainly, new Canadians need to feel warm, respected and valued. Sometimes we hear the opposition talk down about our great province, and that's not what Ontarians are all about. We're a great province. We should be proud of everything we do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

M. Jerry J. Ouellette: L'histoire de ma famille remonte aussi loin que le deuxième bateau venu de France en 1604.

Quite frankly, that is that the family first came across in 1604. If you look at my mother's side, my mother's mother was Ukrainian and my mother's father was Polish. On my father's side, not only was there French but a First Nation. As well, his grandparents on his mother's side were Irish and Scottish.

But I have concerns. I see that we're talking about Bill 161. When you look and see that the Ontario Federation of Labour president backs Putin against the Ukrainians, and he calls the Ukrainians fighting against the Russians "thugs, fascists and anti-Semites," how is that going to attract the quality individuals that we need in the province of Ontario when we're talking about immigration?

Mr. John O'Toole: That's the head of the federation of labour?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Yes, that is correct. That is the Ontario Federation of Labour president, when he states that the Ukrainians fighting against the Russians are thugs, fascists and anti-Semites. Not only that, but this same individual stands up and goes against Israel.

How can we attract quality individuals into the province of Ontario when we have the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour standing up and making statements like this? It only takes away from Canadians. It only takes away from the great province that we have.

My grandmother, my bab'a came in 1927 and landed in Nova Scotia with a single bag; nothing else. She came to make a difference, landing, eventually, here in Oshawa, as did so many other Ukrainians and other individuals from all around the world. We have a great province here, Mr. Speaker. We need to ensure that these individuals who come here to make a difference, to stand up for Canada as a whole, realize that when individuals like the Ontario Federation of Labour president stand up and say the Ukrainians are nothing but thugs, fascists and anti-Semites, it's not what we all represent. We're all-inclusive and we want to make sure Ontario remains that way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

M. Michael Mantha: Aujourd'hui est le temps de célébrer la francophonie de l'Ontario. Ça me fait plaisir de donner mes petits mots en regard du projet de loi 161, la Loi portant sur l'immigration en Ontario et apportant une modification connexe à la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées. Ma collègue de London-Ouest a apporté un bon aperçu du projet de loi.

Mais aujourd'hui, en célébrant la francophonie, je veux vraiment donner de bons commentaires au ministre de l'Immigration en regard du contenu qui va être rajouté. C'est 5 % envers le projet, et puis l'idée d'apporter plus de francophones à la province—je pense que les gens de la communauté francophone et la francophonie apportent un gros plus à la diversité qu'on a dans notre province. C'est vraiment une bonne étape qu'on va prendre pour inviter plus de gens pour ce faire et donner un aperçu de l'Ontario qu'on accueille tous à notre province. Puis, avec des nouveaux, une diversité—ça va vraiment améliorer les services qu'on a ici dans la province, et puis les beaux sourires qu'on a tout le temps des gens francophones.

I also wanted to comment a little bit about this. Last week, when I was on my constituency week, particularly in the community of White River—I'm purposely making this indication so you can hear that—there is a huge demand for work there. Good things are happening up in White River. There's employment—there is a new mill that has opened up—but there is a huge shortage in manpower up there. There are local businesses that are struggling to find man- and womanpower to work in complementary, supporting roles in their economy.

I look forward to seeing the discussions that we're going to have with this bill and I look forward to sharing more comments that I'm going to have on this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member for London West for her comments.

This bill is a step in the right direction for the province of Ontario. It's about charting our own course here. In

fact, I had the opportunity to meet with many of my counterparts, different ministers responsible for immigration across the country, including the federal minister, and I got some good responses with regard to this piece of legislation. In fact, other ministers were asking how they could copy such a piece of legislation to help chart their courses in their provinces, because we know there's a new system coming into place. It's called the expression-of-interest model. It's going to directly link employment with immigration, and we believe it will account for about 50% of all immigration here in Canada.

We, as a Legislature, have to put in place a system that will allow us to work with business and to work with newcomers to ensure that we, as a province, continue to grow and prosper. It is an economic imperative that we get this file right, and I think now is the time that we have to invest in this legislation.

1000

If you compare our record on this side of the House to the former Conservative government and former NDP government, you'll see that this is a government that's very different than the two previous governments. We've made some drastic improvements in settlement services. I don't even think that when the Conservatives were in power, immigration was on their radar. In fact, I don't think I've had a question on immigration from the Conservatives since I've been the minister. I think one came from one member about the provincial nominee program. But it's not even on their radar. If Bill 161 wasn't brought forward, I don't think the Conservatives would even be talking about immigration. They wouldn't even be talking about immigration.

I'm happy that finally a government has come forward to move some great legislation so Ontario can continue to chart its course and be the number one destination for all immigrants and newcomers here in Canada.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from London West, you have two minutes for a response.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough—Agincourt, the member from Oshawa, the member from Algoma—Manitoulin and the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship for their comments.

I wanted to respond to some of the remarks that were made, particularly around the issue of the retention of immigrants. Speaking as the member for London West and given the realities of the experience in my community, I know that we are not retaining immigrants. Many who arrive are leaving, and retention is a big issue for us. We want to do more to enable people who arrive to transition into the workplace and to use the skills that they bring, which are often exceptional skills that they have been trained for in their countries of origin.

In response to the member from Oshawa, I think the most important thing that we can do to attract immigrants is to ensure that we have smooth credential recognition processes and accessible bridging processes to enable them to become licensed and enter the professions for which they were trained.

I agree with the member from Algoma—Manitoulin about the importance of setting a target for francophone immigrants, because we want to be welcoming to the diversity of people across the world and, of course, we want to engage francophone newcomers and all the skills that they bring to our economy and, as the member pointed out, for our labour force.

Finally, to the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, I would say yes, I agree; this is a step in the right direction. It's important, and I'm glad to hear about the conversations you've been having with the federal government and your counterparts in other provinces.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Et des affaires francophones. Alors, je voudrais souhaiter à tous les Ontariens aujourd'hui, tous les francophones et francophiles de l'Ontario, une bonne journée de la Francophonie.

Sur ce, monsieur le Président, ça me fait plaisir de parler aujourd'hui sur notre projet de loi sur l'immigration. Premièrement, je voudrais féliciter le ministre de l'Immigration pour cette belle initiative. Dans ce projet de loi, il y a—pour la première fois, on veut encourager l'immigration francophone ici en Ontario. On est le premier gouvernement qui se donne une cible pour encourager l'immigration francophone en Ontario. Alors, je voudrais féliciter le ministre qui a pensé à cette belle initiative fort bien acceptée par la communauté francophone.

Ce projet de loi est important. Il est important pour nous tous parce que les Ontariens, on vient tous d'ailleurs. On est une terre d'accueil. On a accueilli des gens d'à peu près tous les pays au monde. Puis, les gens se sentent bien ici.

On sait qu'il y a certaines provinces qui, oui, se disent qu'elles veulent bien accueillir des immigrants mais qui mettent toutes sortes d'embûches, toutes sortes de politiques en place qui font que les immigrants qui viennent ici ne se sentent pas toujours bien accueillis.

Mais en Ontario, on doit se féliciter tous et toutes parce qu'on a toujours été une communauté ouverte. On aime accueillir des immigrants de tous les pays, et ça fait que l'Ontario—moi, je pense à tout ce que les autres communautés immigrantes, lorsqu'elles sont arrivées ici, ont apporté à l'Ontario, ce qui fait qu'on est une province où la plupart des immigrants veulent venir, qu'ils viennent ici à travers d'autres provinces. Finalement, même les francophones veulent venir ici en Ontario parce qu'ils savent qu'ils vont être bien accueillis.

Alors, oui, il y a des lacunes encore. On entendait tantôt parler des professionnels qui viennent d'ailleurs et qui doivent attendre pour pouvoir exercer leur profession. Mais ceci dit, on a fait beaucoup d'avancées là-dessus. On a maintenant un commissaire qui reçoit les plaintes de ces gens-là qui sont des professionnels—et des associations professionnelles, des corps professionnels ne sont peut-être pas pleinement ouverts à l'accueil des immigrants. Alors, le ministre, bien sûr, a voulu mettre en

place des mesures—le ministre présent et les ministres passés—mais sous notre gouvernement, on a fait beaucoup d'avancées sur ce côté-là.

Comme je vous dis, je suis issue d'une famille immigrante qui est venue ici au 17^e siècle de France—la famille de mon père et la famille de ma mère. Alors, je n'ai pas de mère d'origine irlandaise et de père d'origine française; les deux venaient de France, de Normandie. Ils se sont établis au Québec, et je suis la première de ma famille d'avoir déménagé ici en Ontario. Je suis venue ici parce que je voulais apprendre l'anglais, parce que je viens d'une communauté que je dis toujours est 125 % francophone.

Pour une de mes collègues qui disait la semaine dernière que je ne connais pas le côté agricole parce que je représente Ottawa-Vanier, je voudrais la corriger, parce que je viens d'un petit village d'à peu près 350 de population. C'est un village agricole dans les Laurentides. Alors, je connais très bien le côté agricole.

Oui, ce projet de loi-là va mettre en place des balises et des outils qui vont assurer de plus en plus que les francophones peuvent venir ici en Ontario et être bien accueillis et connaître aussi les services qui leur sont offerts.

Du côté des affaires francophones, on travaille avec des associations communautaires pour que nos immigrants francophones—moi, je suis toujours surprise quand j'entends qu'il y a des immigrants francophones qui ne connaissent pas tous les services qu'on offre ici en Ontario. Alors, ça me dit qu'il faut avoir de meilleures communications pour que ces gens-là, lorsqu'ils arrivent, sachent qu'on a un bon système d'éducation en français ici en Ontario et que leurs enfants peuvent s'inscrire, ou les parents peuvent inscrire les enfants, dans des écoles francophones; aussi, qu'on a deux collèges francophones et des universités bilingues ici en Ontario, alors, leurs enfants peuvent continuer à poursuivre leurs études en français.

De plus, ils doivent aussi savoir que, même ici à Toronto, on peut offrir des services de santé en français et que si les enfants veulent poursuivre des professions, ils peuvent, pour la plupart, étudier des professions en français, soit à l'Université Laurentienne à Sudbury, soit à l'Université de Hearst, soit à l'Université d'Ottawa, soit à l'Université St-Paul, soit au Collège universitaire dominicain. Alors, ce sont des institutions postsecondaires francophones ici en Ontario, en plus du Collège Boréal et de La Cité collégiale.

On doit s'assurer que les gens connaissent ces services, et aussi, s'ils ont des problèmes, qu'ils puissent avoir recours à des services qui peuvent les aider, soit à continuer de poursuivre leurs études, soit à pouvoir exercer leur profession ici en Ontario. Ils peuvent avoir recours à des services de mise à niveau. Certaines universités et certains collèges vont aussi leur permettre, surtout, de faire évaluer leurs acquis, et, s'ils n'ont pas tous les acquis dont on a besoin pour pratiquer ici, ils peuvent poursuivre leurs études pour, justement, avoir tous les critères et qualifications dont ils ont besoin pour pouvoir exercer leur profession ici en Ontario.

Je mets l'accent sur l'accueil des immigrants parce que, mieux les immigrants sont accueillis, meilleures seront leurs chances de succès—en fait, leurs chances de succès pour qu'ils soient bien intégrés et aussi leurs chances de succès économique. Lorsque tous ces critères-là sont alignés, on est tous gagnants ici en Ontario.

Alors, je voudrais m'assurer que les gens ici en Chambre appuient ce projet de loi-là, et, en terminant, je voudrais, une dernière fois, féliciter le ministre de l'Immigration pour cette belle initiative. On sait que notre ministre de l'Immigration est un immigrant ici en Ontario, et nous sommes très chanceux d'avoir une personne ayant ses qualités et ses talents à la tête. Il comprend bien les défis d'une personne qui arrive ici au pays et, surtout, en Ontario. En Ontario, on veut être—on est—une province où les immigrants sont bien accueillis, et on veut continuer sur cette voie-là.

Monsieur le Président, je vous remercie de votre attention.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Today Samantha Unger is the page captain; she's from York Centre, and I'm delighted to welcome her parents, Jill Unger, and Mitch Unger, and her brother, Spencer. Welcome.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Rob Black from the Rural Ontario Institute, and a number of beef farmers who are here today to participate in the Rural Ontario Institute's Build program. In the gallery are Doug Helm, Rob Thompson, Rachel Bulmer, Karen Mansfield, David Noorloos, Mike Edwards, Dave Cavanagh, Bill Herron, Michael Hargrave, Betty-Jo Almond and Sandi Brock. I would like to welcome them all to Queen's Park. I look forward to meeting with them this afternoon.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted today to have David MacAlpine and Frank Tall in the gallery: a retired mathematician and a retired statistician.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to welcome my friend Mike Yen, a resident of Trinity-Spadina—welcome, Mike—as well as two classes of grade 10 students from Dr. Norman Bethune. They are here with their teachers, Derrick Wong and Caralin Fleet. Welcome to Queen's Park—I think they are just coming in.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce Mary Novak, who's a regional councillor for Durham—as well as her friend, a political activist, Gail Elizabeth Dowsett. They purchased lunch with me for supporting the Bethesda women's shelter in Clarington. Thanks for coming today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je veux juste souhaiter une belle Journée internationale de la Francophonie à tous mes collègues à l'Assemblée, et à vous aussi, monsieur le Président. Bonne journée de la Francophonie.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. The member from Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to join our critic for agriculture to introduce two people from my riding. I'd like to introduce wonderful ambassadors of Ontario's beef industry: Doug Helm, who hails from outside of Lucknow, in Huron county, and Rob Thompson, who is proud to call Ripley and Bruce county home.

Mr. Bill Walker: Similar to my colleague from Huron–Bruce, I would like to introduce Bill Herron and Michael Hargrave from the Beef Farmers of Ontario, from the beef capital of Canada, Bruce and Grey counties.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my great pleasure to welcome one of the great beef farmers from Lambton county, Dave Noorloos, here with us today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Well, Premier, you got caught red-handed again. You were told about the precarious state of Ontario's finances on one day, and went out the next and told the bonding agencies the complete opposite. In fact, you and your finance minister told the entire Legislature the complete opposite of what you knew to be the facts, and now you're trying to block the release of public documents that you know show the real you.

This is not the old Liberals doing this; this is you, Premier. You preach openness and transparency, but as soon as we published public documents you tried every trick in the book to block us. Premier, exactly what is it that you don't want Ontarians to see?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. I'm already beginning to hear things that I don't like, and I'll stop it.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the government House leader is going to want to speak to the specifics of the documentation that the member opposite is referring to. But I just want to make a general statement, and that is that, since I have been in this office, I have done everything in my power to provide information and answers to questions, whether it's questions on the relocation of gas plants—we opened up the process around the gas plants. We provided tens of thousands of documents to the committee. I've appeared before the committee twice.

In terms of our fiscal situation, the information that is provided in the fall economic statement speaks to the exact situation that we are in in Ontario. We were very open about the realities of our situation, including the revenue shortfall of \$5 billion. I hope that the member opposite has had a chance to read the fall economic statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, your government got caught again, so out come the Liberal buzzwords. The budget was re-calibrated. No one in accounting even knows what that means. Nonetheless, we're talking about a fixed point in time last spring. You and your cabinet were told the cold, hard facts, and you turned around and told the bond agencies the complete opposite. Now they say the budget will be aspirational. They aspire to have better numbers. I'm sorry, Premier, but the financial world doesn't want your aspirations; they want the real numbers.

You're doing everything in your power, Premier—everything in your power—to block the facts from getting out. Why do you continue to say one thing and do the opposite?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's talk about some numbers, because the member opposite has stated he's interested in some numbers. So let's talk about some reality here, what we're dealing with. We exceeded our fiscal targets four years in a row. We're the leanest government in Canada. If you look at the cost of programs, we're the leanest government in Canada. We have created more than 446,000 net new jobs since the recessionary low. Employment rose in Ontario by 95,700 jobs in 2013. We've created 9,000 youth job placements through the youth employment fund since September.

Those are the facts. That is what is happening. The advice that we have gotten from officials is advice that we have acted on when we released the fall economic statement. Those numbers and that advice were reflected in the fall economic statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, let's look at the secret documents you tried to have quashed today. Let's see what you didn't want the public to see. You have a fiscal gap. First it was \$3.5 billion. Two days later, you were told, "Your plans fall short of managing within allocations." So you bumped up the gap to \$3.6 billion, with no plan on how to pay for it. Then you went to a caucus retreat to take decisive action on reducing this massive hole. Sadly, you spent a further \$900 million that day, bringing the hole in your budget to \$4.5 billion. That's just the extra. That does not take into account the \$10.1-billion deficit and the \$7.2-billion deficit you're already forecasting. Premier, I can see why you want these documents to be kept from the public. What else are you hiding from us?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government house leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm a little bit disappointed in the honourable member across the way. I think he would realize above anyone, as someone who has served on a number of committees that have had access to certain government information, that there's a balance in this

Legislature. We've discussed this before in the House. Where committees have the right to information, that information is provided to them, but there are also moments when there are commercial confidences, when there are private matters, when there are third party issues, when there are documents that are of such a sensitive nature that the public versions are redacted.

I quote from 2002. The Minister of Energy of the day, Mr. Wilson, in regard to confidential information on a lease agreement between the Ontario Power Generation and British Energy, acknowledged at that time that disclosure of financial and commercial information from Ontario Power "may prejudice significantly"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

1040

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: To the Premier: If anyone should be standing up and bringing a point of privilege, it should be us against every minister who attended the cabinet retreat where it was disclosed you have a \$4.5-billion budget gap and then stood in this House and told the rest of us, "We're on track to balance the budget."

Premier, you knew that what you were telling this Legislature, the financial community and the public was the exact opposite from the real financial picture. When we presented these public documents, your first reaction was to attack me personally and accuse me of releasing confidential documents, even though you know those documents were supplied by the Clerk and are public documents.

Premier, last September, you stood and said, "I don't believe ... undermining people's credibility or attempting to do that is necessary." When did you change your tactics, or was that always your MO?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you. Order.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me continue the quote. In 2002, the Minister of Energy of the day, Minister Wilson, in regard to confidential information on a lease agreement between the Ontario Power Generation and British Energy, acknowledged at that time that disclosure of financial and commercial information from Ontario Power—and I'll use his words—"may prejudice significantly the competitive position of the corporation or result in undue loss of gain to parties other than the corporation."

Mr. Speaker, that's just one example, when they were in power, of how efforts were made to make sure that there was a balance between the committee's right to see documents and the fact of the matter that certain documents are of a sensitive nature.

Those documents were provided to the committee, but there was also an urging of the committee, which the

committee accepted, to hold those documents in confidence without the express permission of the committee itself.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: To the Premier: I realize you're talking about 20-year-old documents, but why don't we look at a very recent one and see what you didn't want disclosed to the people of Ontario?

The gravity of the situation in Ontario comes to light in a note from your financial officials. They tell you that because you haven't implemented any changes in your spending habits, you now have to cut \$6.9 billion. They say, "Changes since 2012 budget show a deterioration in the fiscal outlook beyond 2013-14."

Premier, you want to keep this information from being made public, but you can't. These are public documents that you want quashed. This tells me we've only scratched the surface. These are the ones that are already disclosed. There's something else in those files you don't want us to see.

So I ask my fellow MPPs: Lend us your staff to scour through these thousands of documents and discover what Kathleen Wynne does not want us to see.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

I will remind the member, and all members, again that we use titles or ridings.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to get this clear. The honourable member is standing up and quoting from documents that were provided by the Ministry of Finance to the committee, which are in the public domain, which are in the possession of all the members of the committee, and he's standing here in the Legislature and asking why we do not give them the documents. Mr. Speaker, we gave—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will come to order. The member from Oxford will come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the best estimate we have is that there have been over 2.6 million documents provided to various committees by this government. The fishing expeditions of the opposition have cost tens of thousands of dollars in staff time and have tied up the bureaucracy. But we recognize their right for those documents, and we have provided them.

Mr. Speaker, they—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry. Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, we have the documents, and you're trying to stop us from releasing them. I'll tell you what's in another one of them. You continue to use the buzzword "aspirational." Let's see what the secretary of cabinet told you in one of these documents. "The plan to

continue reducing spending beyond 2015-16 is largely aspirational in nature rather than backed up by detailed plans and measures to get us there." So now we know what "aspirational" means: "We'd love this to happen. We just have absolutely no idea how to get there."

Premier, is this your idea of governing: You get caught, and you attempt to drag me through the mud to distract from the fact that you have no plan for the 600,000 men and women who woke up this morning without a job? This is the latest example of the Liberals putting their priorities ahead of the needs of the people of Ontario.

Hon. John Milloy: The member should know that the Oscar season was a few weeks ago. The fact of the matter is that we have provided thousands and thousands of pages of documents to that committee. Those documents have been made public. They are available for discussion and debate here in the Legislature. At the time—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's enough. Yes, I did; I caught you. You can look away all you want.

Hon. John Milloy: At that time, the committee, on which the opposition has a majority, decided that certain parts of documents which are of a sensitive nature should remain confidential unless the committee itself decided otherwise. That was the committee's decision. The documents that he has received, that he's talking about today, are in the public domain. The other documents that will be part of a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure you would agree, will be dealt with later in today's session.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Over the last few weeks, we've been putting forward positive plans to clean up the mess in our electricity system to help small business and job creators. Yesterday, the Premier wouldn't even confirm what current government policy is when it comes to her planned tax cuts for the wealthy. Why can't the Premier answer basic questions about her fiscal plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the leader of the third party for the question. What I said yesterday was that we will be bringing our budget forward. There will be information, obviously, laid out about how we are going to move forward to make sure that we meet the needs of the people in the province. Part of that is taking costs out of the electricity system, and we have a long-term energy plan that speaks to just that. It speaks to having a reliable energy plan in the province, something which we have not heard come forward from the NDP. In fact, all we've heard from the NDP on energy is that they don't agree with any of the initiatives that we've taken. They don't agree with nuclear; they don't agree with green energy; they don't agree with any of it. But what they would do, we have absolutely no idea. So we have a long-term energy plan. We will be bringing the budget forward. In the meantime, I look forward to any conversation that the leader would like to have.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberal plan seems to be changing day by day. The party that brought us the HST and sky-high hydro rates is suddenly concerned about the middle-class squeeze.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier, who said she had no choice but to ask families to shoulder new taxes, tolls and fees, is suddenly scrambling to back away from her own ideas.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Training, Colleges and Universities, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Would the Premier agree with the following statement: Liberals have very strong principles, and if you don't like them, they can change?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I don't have the Marx Brothers response to that. I believe it was one of the Marx Brothers who—that's a paraphrase.

We know, and have known all along, that the middle class is the backbone of the economy. We know that. That's why we put the 30%-off-tuition grant in place. That's why we've been working so hard to make sure that costs like electricity are managed and that there are plans in place to help people and programs in place to help people deal with those costs.

What I said last week about the decisions around how we will raise revenue for the transit fund—I simply took some options off the table. We will still bring forward a transit plan, Mr. Speaker. There will be a transparent fund that will provide for the building of transit into the future.

1050

What's the leader of the third party is not saying is that she does not support and has not put forward any ideas about how we would actually build transit into the future. We're committed to doing that. We will bring forward our plan in the budget. I think it would be consistent with the history of the NDP if they actually supported the building of transit and transportation in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, families feeling squeezed in tough times are looking for a government to focus on creating jobs, making life more affordable and to respect the money that they send to Queen's Park. Instead, they see a Liberal government scrambling to distance themselves from their own policy while this same old status quo rolls on. Does the Premier really think that is good enough?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really think that it's a bit rich for the leader of the third party to talk to me about distancing myself from policies when unrecognizable across the floor is anything that would resemble the NDP that I have known in the past.

We are committed to making the investments that are necessary to move this province forward, Mr. Speaker,

and one of those is investing in transit and in an integrated transportation system. We know, for example, that in the north, roads and bridges are what are necessary if we're going to have solid transportation planning. That's why we have a \$100-million roads and bridges fund. I'd ask the leader of the third party: Does she support that if she doesn't support transit building?

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier, although I find it ironic that this is the government that cancelled the ONTC. Nonetheless, New Democrats have been putting forward some achievable, affordable, concrete plans to make life better for people and to create jobs. For example, a job creation tax credit is a simple way we can reward the companies that are putting people to work, not the ones that are shipping jobs away. It's working in other jurisdictions, and the Obama administration thinks it's going to work too.

Why is the government more interested in defending the status quo than trying to create new jobs with something new?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I am absolutely not in favour of the status quo. In fact, I'm very impatient about our future, which is why I want to move on making the investments that are necessary. I am looking, and we are working with groups of people around the province, and we are putting forward ideas that are going to make life better, including integrated transportation planning.

The leader of the third party neglected to mention that on the ONTC, we have put together a group. We are working to make sure that there is a plan other than clear divestiture, and I think the leader of the third party knows that.

We are going to work with ideas that are feasible, but I would ask the leader of the third party: What would be the cost of the credit that she's putting forward? Is it for every job in the province? I think she hasn't done her homework on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I'm going to try again with another one of our plans. Our broken electricity system is driving up bills, and it's driving businesses out of Ontario. In fact, American cities are trying to entice Ontario businesses with cheaper electricity, and the worst part is, it's our electricity. The people of Ontario subsidize electricity exports to the US, and the US uses those discount prices to lure our jobs away.

We've put forward a concrete plan to stop exporting hydro at a discount rate. Why is the government more interested in defending the status quo than trying something new to create jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will speak to the specifics of the energy issue, but I just want to point out that, as the NDP leader has done for a number of weeks now, she is pulling individual issues out of the air. We are working to address the concerns of the people of the province of Ontario in context, in a coherent way. Having a long-

term energy plan is that kind of coherence. You can't just deal with issues on the one-off. Supporting business, making sure the people have jobs—those have to have coherent plans.

In fact, this NDP plan—which isn't a plan; it's just a single initiative—would actually drive electricity bills up. What the NDP wants to do is end electricity exports that save ratepayers \$300 million a year. Well, we're not going to do that. But if you want to bring forward a plan that's part of a broader, coherent strategy, we'd be happy to look at that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People see Liberals scrambling to defend sky-high CEO salaries at bloated hydro agencies; selling discount electricity to the US and sticking families with the bill; opening loopholes for CEOs that can get the HST off their entertainment expenses; and scrambling to back away from some of their own plans.

What they don't see is a plan to put their priorities first and create and protect good jobs. Why is this government more interested in defending the status quo than working than in trying something new to create jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: On all of those fronts, whether it's job creation or whether it's energy, we are putting in place, as I said, coherent plans that have a number of aspects to them.

If we talk about energy, in our long-term energy plan we talk about the generation of electricity over the next decades. We talk about taking costs out of the system so that, for example, we won't move ahead to build new nuclear, because that's \$15 billion that it's not necessary to spend.

On the job creation strategy, we need to make investments in training and skills. We need to make investments in infrastructure, including transit and transportation. We need to support businesses that are ready to expand or bring their business to Ontario.

We have to have that kind of coherent planning. They cannot be one-offs, as the NDP is proposing.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Premier. A few moments ago, your government House leader threatened to censor, or try to censor, our finance critic for revealing in public documents that you have a \$4.5-billion hole in your so-called aspirational budget. That tactic, the one that you're trying to employ, closely resembles the one that Dalton McGuinty did over the two cancelled gas plans.

It's very difficult for Ontarians to trust you when you say one thing in the backrooms and another thing here in the assembly.

Premier, we want to know from you: What is it going to take for you to come clean on the state of Ontario's economy—a third OPP investigation?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No wonder policing costs are going up in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Regrettably, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: It's disappointing, but let's just go with the facts of what has happened here. A committee of the Legislature, as is its right, asked for documents—in this case, from the Ministry of Finance—and they were provided.

As I pointed out earlier, the committee itself, of which the opposition is the majority, decided that certain documents that were of a confidential nature, that had been identified by the Ministry of Finance, should remain confidential until the committee decided.

That is the issue. My understanding is that you will be hearing a point of privilege on this a little bit later, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, thousands and thousands of documents were provided to that committee as requested. They were the subject of discussion and debate—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Hon. John Milloy:—and over two million documents have been provided to the committee. That, Mr. Speaker, is the situation, and the aspersions that she has put forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The facts are, my finance critic, Vic Fedeli, has the information. He found a \$4.5-billion hole. He has the documents, and you're trying to censor him. The public has these documents, and you're trying to censor a member of the opposition for exposing this government's \$4.5-billion hole. It is nothing different than the cancelled gas plants that we've seen so they could save seats.

1100

This Premier would cling to power in her office at any cost. All we are asking is: Will she come clean and tell the province exactly what the size of the hole in her budget is and what employment practices they are going to employ? We had a Premier in this nation who resigned last night over a \$45,000 expense scandal. Now she has a \$4.5-billion expense scandal. Will she pull the plug on her government?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, the majority on that committee is the opposition, and that committee decided to keep certain documents confidential. There will be a moment later today when this matter can be looked at by privilege.

But it's a little rich, coming from that side of the House, when they want to talk about committees and gas plants. As my colleagues back here have reminded me, when are we going to see the Conservative candidates

come forward at the committee to talk about their promises during the last election to cancel the gas plants and talk about the funding analysis that they've done? If they want to talk about—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Aboriginal Affairs will come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, if there's any party that needs to talk about hiding things before committee, it's the PC Party across the way on what has happened in front of the justice committee.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Less than two weeks ago, you stood in your government caucus room in a press conference saying that you represented change and that you were going to bring transparency and accountability to this province.

Applause.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You may not be applauding at the end of this question.

The next day, what do you do? You appoint Sandra Pupatello as the chair of hydro. Can you tell me how that is different from what has happened in the past and the cronyism that we saw from the McGuinty government before you?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: That question has been asked on several occasions; that question has been raised. My answer is the same. We had two chairs of two of our agencies who had been in office for 10 years, and we decided we were going to replace two chairs.

With respect to the chair that has been referred to by the member of the third party, she has served as a public servant for 17 years in this House. She has served as a minister of three or four different portfolios in government. She has tremendous credibility. She understands the system. She understands budgeting. She understands sensitivity to the public. We could not have chosen a more excellent candidate for that position.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen, this is a simple question about Liberals appointing their friends to a political office in order to get money.

If it was just Sandra Pupatello, we would say, "Oh, well, it's a one-off." But take a look at who you've appointed. You've appointed Michael Bryant to a very nice board with a very nice salary, you've appointed Maria Van Bommel to another board with a very nice salary, and you've appointed your transition team leader, M^{me} Smith, to Washington—just to name a few.

So tell us: How is the Wynne government any different than any other Liberal administration when it comes to appointing their friends to high places on the taxpayers' dime?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to throw a few names out for the members here. Let's talk about Frances Lankin. Let's talk about Elmer Buchanan. Let's talk about Joe Pantalone. Let's talk about Bernard Lord, former Premier of New Brunswick, who was also appointed at the same time as the chair of Hydro One.

We have been meticulous about being across the board in terms of political appointments, and we have nothing to be embarrassed about.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration, the Honourable Michael Coteau.

Speaker, as you'll appreciate, Ontario is still the number one destination in Canada for newcomers. This remains true despite representations otherwise from the party opposite. Newcomers to this province, by and large, have the post-secondary education, the on-the-job experience, the specialized skills and, most of all, the drive to succeed in their chosen careers, thus the creation of our immigration strategy in 2012 and why we have prioritized the licensure of internationally trained professionals. In this regard, the government has introduced the Ontario Immigration Act, an important piece of legislation.

My question, Speaker, is this: How will the Ontario Immigration Act, Bill 161, strengthen our efforts to ensure that highly skilled newcomers, such as physicians and engineers, can find positions in their fields?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member for the question. I'd also like to acknowledge that today is the beginning of Nowruz, so to anyone who is celebrating that wonderful, ancient celebration, all the best.

It gives me great pleasure to talk about Ontario's immigration act, Bill 161, and I'm encouraged by the positive feedback that I've heard in this Legislature in debate. This bill will do many great things for current and prospective newcomers to the province of Ontario. Like the member asking the question stated, helping newcomers find the right type of job that matches their skills is a priority of this government. If Bill 161 is passed, it will amend the Regulated Health Professions Act to provide timely decision-making regarding registration application and access to records by applicants in health care professions. These measures are in line with the recommendations that came from the Fairness Commissioner back in 2013.

I'd also like to highlight that our government will continue to invest into bridge training programs. We made a commitment of \$63 million over the next three years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Nowruz Mubarak to you also, Minister, and thanks for the response of the various measures that you've outlined, which I know will be appreciated widely not only across Ontario, but in my own riding of Etobicoke North.

Ontario's provincial nominee program was designed to nominate workers who address skill gaps that employers have identified. Last year, 86% of businesses benefited from their nominees, including through increased revenues, new contracts and new customers. Recognizing this program's success, the feds recently increased our nomination target from 1,300 nominees to 2,500.

This, of course, is good news, but the changing federal immigration climate is precarious. Over the next few years, there will be the implementation of the expression-of-interest model, which will radically change Ontario immigration.

Speaker, my question is this: How will Bill 161 better configure our provincial nominee program so that we can bring in highly skilled newcomers?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member again for his excellent question.

The member is correct: Our provincial nominee program is making a difference for Ontario businesses that have highly specific skills to fill. The member is also correct in stating that the federal government intends to make massive changes to the immigration system here in the province of Ontario and throughout the country.

Ontario cannot afford to be left behind. We need to take steps to ensure that we chart our own course here in the province of Ontario. Bill 161, if passed, would position Ontario to be a full partner in immigration with the federal government, giving Ontario a framework in which to design, deliver and manage a larger selection of our programs with regard to immigration.

The legislation would allow Ontario to have similar powers to that of the federal government, helping protect our program against fraud and misuse. Ontario is committed to increasing economic immigration to meet the needs of our knowledge-based economy. This proposed legislation would ensure that Ontario has the structures and tools—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. On March 3, in reference to funding for the cystic fibrosis drug Kalydeco for 12-year-old Madi Vanstone, you told this Legislature, "We are going to push to expedite the process" and you will "keep her and her family in the loop."

In fact, when you and your health minister met with Madi and her mom that morning, you promised that you would provide them with biweekly updates to advise them as to what was happening concerning negotiations with the company Vertex and the Pan-Canadian Pricing Alliance.

It has been over two and a half weeks now, Premier, and Madi and her mom have heard absolutely nothing from you or your government. In fact, they haven't even gotten a response to the many emails that they've sent to

you. Since you won't respond to her on your own, like you promised, let me ask you publicly: What have you done to "expedite the process"?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Health will answer to the specifics on the supplementary, but I want the member opposite to know that as recently as yesterday I asked my staff in my daily senior staff meeting whether the Vanstone family had been kept in the loop and wanted to make sure that that communication was happening. If it's not happening, then it will. But I just want the member opposite to know that I asked that question, and I am going to make sure that they get the information they need.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I can assure you that Beth Vanstone, Madi's mother, tells us that that communication is not happening, Premier.

Premier, 15 countries, including England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the United States—and even Greece, which has a 28% unemployment rate—have all found the necessary resources to cover the cost of Kalydeco, and they have agreements in place with Vertex Pharmaceuticals, the company that makes the drug.

I ask you again: How long is your government willing to let Madi Vanstone and other children with cystic fibrosis suffer before you actually do something? How many more bake sales, dog walks and lemonade stands do the children of Beeton and Bradford have to do in order to keep their friend alive? Do we tell these children to continue, or can we finally say to them that your government values Madi's life and will help to save it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm pleased to tell the member opposite that a member of my staff actually has already spoken with Madi's mom earlier today, so we are committed to having that ongoing communication.

I was interested to read an article written by André Picard in the *Globe and Mail* recently. He talked with some thoughtfulness about the process of negotiating prices with drug companies. I have to say, we are continuing that work. I've spoken to the Minister of Health in Alberta. We are asking Vertex, the manufacturer, based in the United States, to actually engage in negotiation with us. They have rejected proposals that are fair proposals. We will continue to fight.

But if the member opposite is suggesting that we pay whatever price those pharmaceutical companies ask us to pay, I have to say I completely disagree with him. Indeed, he disagrees with himself, because when he was health minister, he was in the very position that I am in now.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, according to data provided by MPAC on 240 houses in an area in and around Parkdale-High Park, property assessments for modest homes, where typical middle-class families live, are being over-assessed. For example, a house on Campbell Avenue sold for \$377,000—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay, member, that's enough.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo:—while MPAC had assessed it for \$537,000. It was assessed at 42.9% over market value.

This is another example of how this government is hitting middle-class families with taxes and fees. We've seen evidence in Parkdale-High Park. I ask the minister: Is this the case throughout all of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are very cognizant of the requirement to support our middle class and ensure that people—especially those who are finding it tough to afford to do the things that matter for their families.

We also know that MPAC, which is an arm's-length organization that also includes working with the municipalities by way of making those assessments with regard to the mill rate, is affecting communities all over the province.

As a result of the good work by my parliamentary assistant, Steven Del Duca, we have reviewed MPAC and continue to do what's necessary to revise the processes, to ensure fairness across the system, and we'll do just that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Well, the simple fact is, it's not working. In just one small area of my riding, 20 modest homes were over-assessed, and at least 240 homes throughout the area generally. Why is the Liberal government hitting middle-class families with unfair over-assessments? It continues to go on now.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, it's not a fair comment, and I reject the premise, because there is an appeal process. The householders can go forward and try to find ways to revise their assessment. That occurs all the time, and the member opposite knows that full well, so stop playing politics and help your constituents with the appeal.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Speaker, our government's economic plan has produced solid job numbers. In February alone, we gained 6,100 new jobs, building on the 6,000 gained the month before. Our jobs plan is working. Employment across the province is up by over 440,000 jobs from the recessionary low of 2009. Just last year, employment rose by 95,000 jobs.

Our government has made some tremendous strides throughout the province because of our successful re-

gional economic development funds. These investments have actually impacted my riding positively.

Yesterday, I had the privilege of hosting Glengarry–Prescott–Russell day here at Queen’s Park. My constituents and my community leaders who were here know that there’s a lot of economic growth happening across the province.

Speaker, I’m just going to ask the minister if he could update the House on how we’re creating jobs and partnering with businesses to grow the economy.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for that great question. I enjoyed—as I know many of the members from both sides of the Legislature enjoyed—the Glengarry–Prescott–Russell day yesterday. Thank you to the member for helping to organize that with his community.

The member’s riding, like many ridings in eastern Ontario, has benefited significantly from our Eastern Ontario Development Fund. Just last week on Friday, I spent the whole day in the member’s riding, and it was a wonderful opportunity to meet with many members of the community, including the business community and business leaders. We announced three investments from the Eastern Ontario Development Fund: one in Moulure Alexandria Moulding, creating and retaining 353 jobs there; at Montebello Packaging as well, our investment there is helping the company create and retain 86 jobs; and at Skotidakis Goat Farm, we’ve partnered with this food processor to create and retain 110 jobs—great companies in a great riding in a great province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for your commitment on job creation across the province of Ontario.

I’m excited by the news of these significant investments in my riding, and I know that our government is working to spur growth through strategic partnerships with businesses.

In addition to regional economic development, I know that this government has partnered and invested in other major companies as part of our plan for long-term economic growth. I’m aware of the major Cisco investment that created and retained 3,700 jobs, which is also the single largest tech investment in our province’s history. We also had a significant investment in Ford Canada in Oakville and secured 2,800 jobs. This is great news for all Ontarians to take pride in, and our government has created the conditions for businesses to thrive and invest.

Last week, a significant announcement and investment was made in jobs and in the people of my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Minister, can you please provide this House with an update on that specific announcement?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Once again, thank you to the member for his question. Mr. Speaker, the Strategic Jobs and Investment Fund is specifically targeted to attract strategic investments in innovative projects that will create high-value-added jobs and support cluster development.

We announced one—an important one—last week in the member’s riding, at Ivaco Rolling Mills in L’Original. This investment will help the company modernize their facility. It’s part of the steel sector, and it will increase their capacity to produce high-quality steel products. It’s also going to make the plant much more energy-efficient and a more sustainable operation, as well as reducing emissions. This is all good news for the community and the region. Our investment helped to create and sustain 450 jobs at that important location.

The irony about this is that the official opposition, the party opposite, has not only opposed the southwestern and eastern development funds that result in good-paying jobs, but they continue to talk down business and investment in this great province.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, on Friday, March 7, it was announced that the Stoneboat Community Wind Farm would be withdrawing its proposal to engage in a renewable energy project in my riding.

While this developer made the right decision in withdrawing this project, I have been unable to get an answer from your ministry or the Ontario Power Authority about whether the FIT contract has also been cancelled. It’s like playing a game of whack-a-mole. Where will this show up again? It’s a moving target.

Since your ministry will not respond to questions from my office or requests from the community, I’m asking you directly today: Has this FIT project been cancelled by the Ministry of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member will know that our position is that we will not cancel existing contracts. That’s very, very clear.

The party opposite has flip-flopped on this. I think maybe somebody on that side should work in a shoe store, because they’re experts on flip-flops.

1120

The latest flip-flop is the Million Jobs Act, whereby they give the Minister of Energy the power to cancel existing contracts. That will expose us to litigation of \$20 billion.

With respect to this particular contract, and the other contracts in the area, the people who are proponents will have to meet all the conditions, including environmental conditions, and if they can’t, they will fall by the wayside. We have one that has fallen by the wayside, and we have to wait for the others to see whether they will be successful in the environmental assessment process.

You know that I met with the Buddhist proponents, and we are very, very—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Well, Minister, you did meet with them, and you said you wouldn’t make any approvals till you contact them, and then you made an approval

without letting them know in December, the last day of the Legislature.

You keep saying that it's going to be illegal to cancel feed-in contracts with wind power developers, but I know that on March 4, Wind Concerns Ontario released a letter to you referencing the decision in Trillium versus Ontario 2013, which clearly states that governments are free to alter policies in the public interest.

The \$40-million Cham Shan Temple Buddhist retreat near Bethany is in jeopardy because of the noise these wind turbines will produce. The Peterborough airport and its flight schools are worried about safety because of the siting of a turbine in a flight landing path.

The city of Peterborough, the county of Peterborough and the city of Kawartha Lakes have all said they don't want these wind turbines in their communities. Manvers Wind Concerns Kawartha and thousands of communities said that. You keep extending these contracts. You do have the out. Minister, why won't you listen to all these people in the public interest and cancel all those contracts—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Speaker, whenever there's a review of these, it's a very extensive review which is conducted. A number of ministries make comments to the Ministry of the Environment. The Ministry of the Environment has its officials conducting a review. There are onerous requirements to meet on the part of the proponent. There's even consultation, in some cases, where there's federal jurisdiction. We talk about NAV Canada as one of them. So there are all kinds of consultations that take place—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Rural Affairs, last time.

Hon. James J. Bradley: —these cases, when any individual or group is dissatisfied with the decision that is rendered, that decision can go to a review tribunal. Sometimes these even end up in court. But I want to assure the member that there's always a very extensive review of all of these—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. During the recent by-election, the Premier announced in February that the Fort Erie Race Track would stay open. In the meantime, the racetrack submitted a detailed business plan to the government in February. The deadline to pay their lease is April 1, less than two weeks away, and the track has no details as to whether the festival idea has been approved. They've received no money and no response from this government.

Will the Premier keep her word and respond immediately to the Fort Erie business plan and ensure that the track has the funding they need to operate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the leader of the third party will be very pleased to know that there's a meeting happening next week to finalize an agreement to make sure that there's a robust season for Fort Erie. I know that she will pass that along to any of the people who are concerned.

We're committed to having that season at Fort Erie, and I'm glad the meeting is going to happen next week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I'm talking about more than just a season. I'm talking about a future for the racetrack at Fort Erie.

For almost two years, this government flip-flopped on the Fort Erie Race Track. They don't seem to understand that businesses need stability to operate. Asking the track for a business plan and then not responding when the deadline to shut the doors is looming is just not acceptable. There are 1,000 jobs at stake in Fort Erie.

Will the Premier ensure that the Fort Erie Race Track stays open by providing the funding and long-term commitment they need for more than just one season and for a future of another 100 years at that track?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I'm talking about a five-year plan. I'm talking about \$400 million that we are putting into the horse racing industry to make sure that we have those long-term plans, but the reality is that all of the tracks are going to have to work to make sure that there are business plans in place. These are businesses.

We took out an unaccountable, non-transparent program, and we are putting in place a transparent process. We're investing in the horse racing industry to make sure that the tracks around the province, including Fort Erie, can be sustainable.

I'm glad the meeting is happening next week. One of the issues has been whether there would be a 2014 season. There will be a 2014 season. My hope is that we'll be able to have that long-term plan, and I look forward to seeing the results of the discussion.

SPORTS FUNDING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Minister, just last week, you made an important funding announcement with the Canadian Sport Institute Ontario, CSIO, and a couple of our wonderful Olympic athletes at the University of Toronto. This is great news for my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood, as the CSIO will be housed at the University of Toronto Scarborough campus.

As a legacy piece, the Pan Am aquatic centre and field house will be a beautiful facility that is going to be used by the community and by our athletes for decades to come, after the games are over.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please explain how the funding will benefit Ontario's athletes?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the member from Scarborough—Guildwood for the question.

The funding for CSIO is \$8 million over three years and will purchase specialized equipment, enhance and expand the current Ontario High Performance Sport Initiative, open the new facility and offer programs and services, and also increase base funding to support those operating and programming costs.

Our government recognizes the importance of supporting our high-performance athletes and coaches. The 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games only heighten our shared interest in that support. This is why we are committed to working closely with CSIO.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister, for that response. We can all agree that it's extremely important to support our high-performance athletes and the coaches and organizations that train them. I know this first-hand because my brother has benefited from a successful career in professional sports.

During your announcement, you also mentioned funding for two other programs from your ministry. One of them you mentioned a couple of weeks ago, Quest for Gold, which undoubtedly has proven successful, given the recent results from our amazing Ontarians competing at the Olympics in Sochi; the other being the sport hosting fund, which will help deliver great sporting events to our province, like the upcoming 2014 FIFA Under-20 Women's World Cup.

Mr. Speaker, again through you to the minister: Could he provide us with the details of this funding?

Hon. Michael Chan: Our government is proud to continue our commitment to our high-performance athletes and para-athletes. For 2013-14, my ministry is providing a whopping \$10 million from the Quest for Gold program for a number of them who just returned from Sochi.

In addition to that, the announcement last week also includes \$2 million for our sport hosting fund from Celebrate Ontario, which will help host events like the upcoming 2014 World Junior Girls' Golf Championship.

Since the 2006 launch of Ontario's international amateur sport hosting policy, our government has provided over \$8 million to support 34 events. These investments encourage athletes and national sport organizations to consider Ontario as the province of choice to train and compete.

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: To the Minister of Finance: Ontario's colleges find themselves waiting once again to hear when your government will address the serious backlog of deferred maintenance issues at the province's existing buildings. This is a serious issue for every one of the colleges throughout the province, and it is also a long-standing problem.

1130

In 2010, the Auditor General said the deferred maintenance backlog is in the range of half to three quarters of

a billion dollars. Most significantly, the Auditor General said that about \$70 million of these maintenance and repairs are in the critical category. Minister, this involves safety. Ontario's colleges need to ensure that students are learning in a safe and effective environment.

Can you assure us, Minister, that your 2014 budget will finally address this critical issue?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I've got to tell you, I am astounded by that question coming from the party opposite—a party that cut and slashed our colleges and universities through their entire time in office. We, on the other hand, in stark contrast to their approach, have put in place billions of dollars, record amounts of investment in capital projects for colleges and universities across this province. In the next two years alone, there's \$800 million to be spent in capital investments in our colleges and universities. That's record amounts of funding. Deferred maintenance is an issue, and we're working hard with the sector to address it, but coming from the party opposite, that question is almost laughable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Back to the Minister of Finance.

Last time I checked, the Minister of Colleges and Universities doesn't know what's in the budget. Last time I checked, it's up to the Minister of Finance to do the budget in this province.

Aside from what he said, it was the Auditor General that I'm quoting in his report from 2010. The minister of the day agreed with the auditor. They agreed with the auditor, yet nothing has been done. Four years, and nothing has been done.

Minister, it isn't good enough to simply invest in new buildings. We must ensure that our existing colleges and their many campuses are effectively maintained, and our students deserve nothing less than to learn in a safe environment. You stand in your place today and give our colleges a commitment that your 2014 budget will finally and seriously address these much-needed repairs.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We'll continue to address the capital challenges in our post-secondary sector, but let me tell you what our students deserve. They deserve, and they're getting, a government that stands up for them when it comes to affordability. Our 30% off tuition program is funding 230,000 low- and middle-income students. That's a program that your party wants to cut and eliminate; 230,000 low- and middle-income students would have to find more dollars, \$1,700 more a year, to be able to fund their education. We're going to keep standing up for students. We're going to keep investing in our post-secondary institutions, unlike you did. We'll never leave them in the lurch that you left them in 10 years ago.

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Today I rise to echo—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry. Excuse me. Stop the clock. The member from Oakville will withdraw.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Carry on.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Today I rise to echo concerns of my constituents, as well as elected officials throughout the Niagara region. As the minister knows, conservation authorities have an important job preserving and protecting our land and waterways for Ontarians. Recently, the actions of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority have raised concerns. Their strategic plan shows a shift toward land acquisition disposal and development, and my constituents and elected officials are telling me that property development seems more important than conservation by the NPCA. Does the minister share the concerns of the people of Welland and Niagara about this direction?

Hon. David Orazietti: I'm pleased to respond. I've received a letter today from the member from Welland, so I'm happy to review that and get back to the member, but with respect to conservation authorities, what I am pleased to report is that, since 2003, our government has provided over \$130 million to 36 different conservation authorities across the province. This year we're going to be providing \$12 million as well. With respect to the governance of conservation authorities, the Conservation Authorities Act, 1946, establishes these organizations, and the responsibility and makeup of conservation authorities, as the member knows, is directed largely by elected representatives of municipalities. In fact, the board of directors—they're responsible for making all staffing and hiring decisions with respect to the general manager and the chief administrative officer of the conservation authorities.

I'll have more to say in the supplementary, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I urge the minister to look into this matter. Just yesterday, the NPCA purchased a piece of land in Wainfleet with regional taxpayer dollars that was rejected and deemed unsuitable by the Niagara regional council in 2012. The purchase of that land was conditional on Wainfleet cutting a developer a break and waiving the township's 5%-in-lieu-of-parkland deal—thousands of dollars for that municipality, thousands of taxpayer dollars from the region.

Our conservation authority needs to be focused on keeping water clean, preventing floods and keeping our residents safe from natural hazards, not cutting deals for developers.

To the minister again: Is he prepared to conduct a review or an audit of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority to ensure it is meeting its mandate?

Hon. David Orazietti: To the member: With respect to the accountability of conservation authorities across the province, they are audited regularly, and they are accountable for the funding that we do provide. The large majority of members on conservation authority boards are elected representatives from municipalities. Perhaps some of these questions would be best directed to those municipalities in the regional area.

The reality is that those individuals who are on these boards are accountable to their municipal colleagues who are elected representatives as well.

I'm happy to review this, happy to look into this, but those are independent boards and agencies that are responsible for the decisions that they make and are accountable to their local electorate.

RELEASE OF DOCUMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have received an appropriate point of privilege, and I'm prepared to hear that now. I will call upon the government House leader to make his presentation.

Hon. John Milloy: As you just noted, I rise on a point of privilege, which is in regard to question period on Tuesday, March 18, 2014. At that time, the member from Nipissing disclosed the contents of a confidential committee document.

This disclosure, I would submit, was a flagrant and intentional breach of a November 26, 2013, motion of the Standing Committee on Estimates which required that certain commercially sensitive and privileged documents be kept confidential. The release of confidential committee documents to the public without authorization from the committee I believe represents a serious breach and must attract strong sanction to defer future breaches.

To go through the facts, giving rise to contempt, I begin with the statement in question period by the member. He made the following statement in a question to the Minister of Finance: "We also saw that you blacked out many emails, labelling them 'commercially sensitive information.'"

"Let's take a look at what you were covering over," and he quotes from the document: "No funding for incremental compensation increases for new collective agreements; salaries for designated groups frozen until 2017-18."

This disclosure was done with full knowledge that the information was intended to remain confidential and despite the clear direction from the estimates committee that the information not be made public.

I'd like to spend a few minutes on the estimates committee and the direction they gave. First of all, the statement read by Mr. Fedeli was contained in a document that was disclosed by the Ministry of Finance in response to the following June 11, 2013, motion of the estimates committee: "I move that the Standing Committee on Estimates request from the Ministry of Finance, Cabinet Office and Office of the Budget and Treasury Board the following documentation: all fiscal journals produced for treasury board/Management Board of

Cabinet between April 1, 2013, and June 11, 2013; medium- and long-term expense outlooks containing fiscal years 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18; any documents dated 2013 containing consideration of user fees and/or revenue-generating fees, taxes or tolls; all fiscal and economic update presentations and/or slide decks provided to cabinet.”

On October 15, 2013, the Ministry of Finance provided the committee with an unprecedented number of privileged and commercially sensitive documents that were responsive to this motion. In light of the sensitive nature of the disclosure, the ministry provided two sets of documents to the committee. One set was redacted for privileged and commercially sensitive information, and one set contained unredacted copies of the documents, which were not to be made public.

1140

On November 26, 2013, the committee passed a motion which required unredacted documents to be kept confidential and the committee to notify the Ministry of Finance in advance should the committee decide to make the unredacted documents public. I quote from the decision of the committee:

“Your subcommittee on committee business met on Tuesday, October 29, 2013, and Thursday, November 7, 2013, to consider the method of proceeding with the information received from the Ministry of Finance pursuant to the June 11, 2013, motion adopted in committee during the review of the 2013-14 estimates of the Ministry of Finance, and recommends the following:

“(1) That the committee accepts the information received from the Ministry of Finance that are responsive to parts 1, 2 and 4 of the motion.

“(2) That one electronic copy of all redacted and unredacted documents received be provided to each caucus and that the caucuses keep the unredacted documents confidential.

“(3) That the Ministry of Finance be notified in advance should the committee decide to make the unredacted information public.

“(4) That the redacted documents responsive to part 2 of the motion be made public.

“(5) That the subcommittee meet when the information responsive to part 3 of the motion is received by the committee.”

Mr. Speaker, disclosure of confidential committee information is a breach of privilege. On May 20, 2010, the Speaker commented on the nature of confidentiality in committee, stating:

“A parliamentary committee is a creature of this House, subservient to the instructions of this House and able to report only to this House.... An unauthorized or premature release of a committee report or in camera proceedings has indeed been found on certain occasions in this Legislature and others to be a prima facie breach of the privileges of the Legislature.”

Release of commercially sensitive information is serious. It puts negotiations at risk, it creates an unstable business environment and it undermines the trust of third parties whose records we disclose.

The question has been raised: Why are we raising that in the House and not the committee? As members may be aware, estimates committee is not currently sitting, pursuant to standing order 63(a) of the standing orders. The statement in question, I would also remind members, was made in the House and therefore, I contend, should be dealt with in the House.

There were questions raised in question period this morning of whether an unredacted version of this document exists and whether this is a cure for contempt. Although, as I say, that question may be out there, of whether there is an unredacted separate document, it is clear from the member's own statement that he knew that the information was intended to be kept confidential. It was clearly redacted in the copy that the copy that the member read to us. It is clear that the information was intended to be confidential to the committee and that the member was aware.

The member from Nipissing, I remind you, specifically noted that the information he read had been blacked out. He specifically stated that information had been “blacked out” on the basis of “commercial sensitivity.” Before quoting directly from the redacted portion of the document, the member from Nipissing said, “Let’s take a look at what you were covering over.”

If there was any uncertainty about whether the information was confidential and how it should have been dealt with, I think the member should have taken the matter to the committee.

Now, due to the large number of documents disclosed, it is possible that human error may occur and information that was intended to be redacted is not in one or more documents. This was specifically noted by the Deputy Minister of Finance in his cover letter which accompanied the ministry's production in response to this motion:

“Please note that every effort has been made, including the retention of an outside law firm specializing on document disclosure, to identify commercially sensitive information. However, given the volume and scope of material being included and the time period to produce these records, the ministry cannot guarantee that all commercially sensitive information has been redacted.”

Another point that has been raised is about the time of me raising this. I would argue that this issue was raised at the first opportunity. It did take a bit of time due to the voluminous number of records provided by the Ministry of Finance in response to the committee's request for information. Time was needed to review the records and identify the information referred to by the member.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to summarize. We are a government which has prided itself on our openness. We have put forward millions of records across a number of committees—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. John Milloy: But what we are talking about today—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. John Milloy: —is that the member from Nipissing improperly released documents that the committee, including members from his own caucus, deemed to be commercially sensitive. The committee was—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton will come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the committee was unanimous in voting to keep—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And Stormont.

Hon. John Milloy: —the commercially sensitive documents confidential. They did this because releasing them could negatively impact our business environment and job creation or hurt taxpayers. We released thousands of documents, intending to make them public, but that doesn't apply to those documents that could hurt private commercial interests or taxpayers.

The fact of the matter is, if the honourable member had any questions about those documents, he had every right to go back to refer to the committee motion, which made it very clear that they should be kept confidential unless the committee decided otherwise.

So, Mr. Speaker, I therefore move that the matter of the Speaker's finding of a prima facie case of privilege with respect to the disclosure of confidential information by the member for Nipissing—that you hear the matter, and I will obviously—

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: Sorry. I won't go there, Mr. Speaker.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, for you to refer the matter and, of course, if you were to rule in the positive, I would be in a position to refer it to a specific committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I seek response, first of all, thank you for withdrawing that motion; it would not be appropriate. I thank the member for his submission.

I was going to say, right up until the last second, thank you to all of the members for their important and collegial response to this serious issue. I would expect it to continue; and for those that started, to stop.

So now I'm prepared to hear another point of order on the same issue from the opposition House leader.

Mr. Jim Wilson: First of all, I will be very brief because the honourable member for Nipissing, Mr. Fedeli, can certainly speak for himself on this matter.

Nothing has happened that is in any way a breach of the trust of the committee or the confidentiality of the committee. The documents, as you'll clearly see—and I have the CD here. The redacted documents that Mr. Fedeli made public were in the public domain. The honourable House leader for the government said that this morning in question period when he said, "Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to get this clear."

The honourable member is standing up and quoting from documents that were provided by the Ministry of Finance to the committee, which are in the public domain, which are in the possession of all members of the

committee. He's standing here in the Legislature and saying that we did not give them the documents.

Secondly, just because he has mentioned the point, this is all contained—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: —in our submission previously to you, Mr. Speaker, but we do question the fact that just because the estimates committee isn't sitting, they can't deal with this matter. They should be called back to deal with this matter, as per our standing orders. You tried this trick during gas plants and said the committee wasn't sitting right at the very beginning when we brought the contempt motion forward; that didn't hold water then, and it shouldn't hold water in this case.

Secondly, we do question—although it's a more minor point, I would agree with the honourable House leader—the timeliness of this. The beginning of this so-called incident began quite a few days ago, and it's only now that they're bringing it forward.

Having said that, it is clear to anyone that the documents that Mr. Fedeli put forward came from either the CD or physically from the box that everybody in the committee room knew were the public documents.

Now, you guys messed up by citing four different versions of one document. You redacted, as Mr. Fedeli will show you, two lines of the four lines in one document, you didn't redact anything in another document, you redacted a different line in a third document—this is all the same page, just four different times. It shows your government can't even do a cover-up properly.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Excuse me. Order, please.

The member will withdraw.

1150

Mr. Jim Wilson: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

And then there's another copy, a fourth copy of the document, where two other different lines were redacted.

This is a smear campaign. It is below the respect I have for the government House leader on many other matters. He is the person who's supposed to be in charge of the Open Government project that this government is apparently going forward on. The fact that he would do this to my colleague is shameful. You're just simply trying to distract the public from the fact that Mr. Fedeli is a better finance minister than your finance minister will ever be and that he, through diligent work and thousands of documents, has found—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I'm trying to be as lenient as possible, but I'm also going to ask that you stay directly on the specifics of this issue, please. Thank you.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I get a little emotional, Mr. Speaker, when they pull this nonsense to distract the public from the fact that they can't be honest with the public about the finances of this province.

But having said that, I've dealt with some of the technical arguments that the honourable House leader has

brought forward, and I know Mr. Fedeli would like an opportunity to make his presentation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The House leader of the third party.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: From New Democrats, as the House leader, I want to make a couple of points here. First of all, the honourable House leader for the government said that the estimates committee is not sitting. That is not the case. The estimates committee actually did sit two weeks ago. They're still able to meet because there are some procedural matters they still have to deal with, so I think he should correct his record; in fact, estimates is still in session, and this could have been brought to estimates.

The second thing I would say—I understand that the government is concerned with regard to them feeling sensitive at this particular time within their mandate. They're feeling a little bit, how would you say, “under pressure,” considering what's going on politically in this province, and I understand their wanting to try to do this.

But I've got to say the following. The government is right: We have seen an unprecedented number of documents that have been released to various committees of this assembly; that is true. But we also have seen that the government, numerous times, tried to say that certain documents were sensitive, tried to make them private and confidential in camera with the committee, but then when committee members looked at the documents, they weren't commercially sensitive; they were politically embarrassing. That was the difference.

The government in this particular case is making the argument that these were documents that were commercially sensitive. All I'm saying for the record, Mr. Speaker, is that there have been lots of examples in committee over the last two and a half years where documents were attempted to be put in camera by the government so that they would not be released, supposedly because they were commercially sensitive, where, in fact, they were not. I would just say to the government and to your deliberation on that to take that into account.

I understand why the government House leader rises, but I think the point has also been made that the same document exists both in the commercially—just to make it clear: documents are given to the committee, and then the committee has to vote if those documents are made public. The same documents, as I understand it, that are being referred to that are supposedly the ones that are in camera that can't be released are actually in the public documents as well. I think you need to look at both of those when you're making a decision about whether this is, in fact, a case of contempt.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I wanted to take this opportunity to respond to the minister's point of privilege that he sent to you on March 19, 2014. The point of privilege revolves around his accusation that I released confidential documents from the Standing Committee on Estimates.

As you read in the minister's submission, the Standing Committee on Estimates requested the documents on

June 11, 2013, from the Ministry of Finance. Once the documents were received by the committee, the committee passed a motion that said, “[O]ne electronic copy of all redacted and unredacted documents received be provided to each caucus.” It goes on to say that unredacted documents were to remain confidential and redacted documents were to be made public—period.

I draw to your attention subsection 4 of the November 26 motion, which states: “That the redacted documents responsive to part 2 of the motion be made public.” This is precisely and only where the information I released was sourced: from the redacted files, which were already made public.

This disk here has two sides: “confidential” and “confidential—unredacted and redacted.” Part 2 is the area, and only the area, which I drew from.

This is why the minister is categorically false in his assertion that I was releasing confidential information from an unredacted document. I did no such thing. I only released information that the committee had already released into the public domain—again, only from that file.

I have attached in my letter to you, Speaker, four different print screens to my written submission. At the top left hand of each of these screen captures, you'll notice that it says “redacted box,” “redacted box,” “redacted box,” “redacted box.” Again, the redacted documents of part 2 “be made public”—so again, I'm only dealing with public documents. You will notice, also, that they tell you which box they're from: box 1, box 4 and box 7. All of that is included on the disk.

You will also note that I have included the page number for you to see: page 373 out of 2,970; page 2,736 out of 3,171; page 2,849 out of a possible 3,179; and page 2,185 out of 2,303 pages. Again, all of that is attached in my document.

In each of these public domain redacted documents, which were per the committee's November 26 motion, you will clearly see that the quote cited by the minister in his submission is redacted in two of the attached documents, but not redacted in box 4 or box 7. Therefore, they are accessible in the public domain.

Again, if I may repeat what the House leader of the third party said, there's nothing commercially sensitive about these; they're just politically explosive.

Let me illustrate again: In one of the versions of the document—on the redacted, which are public domain—somebody has redacted three different paragraphs. In another version of it, somewhere else in the document, somebody has redacted the first and last, but not all the ones in the middle. In another version, somebody redacted the second and the last, not the first and the middle—but this person here just left it all unredacted.

This is the document that I am going from. This is in the redacted file, totally in the public domain, that anybody in the media who takes the disk can access just as easily as I did. That's the evidence that I have specifically to the documents and where I sourced them: only sourced from public domain documents that the committee has already released.

Now, Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to the general rule regarding points of privilege stemming from matters in committee. Mr. Milloy's issue is strictly related to the release of documents that were confidential to the committee. In fact, all of Mr. Milloy's references and precedents relate to the committee.

However, O'Brien and Bosc are categorical when discussing the proper procedures about matters of privilege related to committee. They state: "Speakers have consistently ruled that, except in the most extreme situations, they will only hear questions of privilege arising from committee proceedings upon presentation of a report from the committee which directly deals with the matter and not as a question of privilege raised by an individual member."

They also point to a ruling from former House of Commons Speaker Peter Milliken, concerning the disclosure of a confidential draft committee report. In that case, Speaker Milliken ruled, "In the absence of a report from the committee on such an issue, it is virtually impossible for the Chair to make any judgment as to the *prima facie* occurrence of a breach of privilege with regard to such charges."

Therefore, the issue should not have even come to the floor of this Legislature, because the government House leader has ignored parliamentary tradition and procedure by failing to raise the issue at the Standing Committee on Estimates.

1200

Lastly, I take issue with the timeliness of Mr. Milloy's point of privilege. Parliamentary authorities state that a "member must satisfy the Speaker that he or she is bringing the matter to the attention of the House as soon as practicable after becoming aware of the situation. When a member has not fulfilled this important requirement, the Speaker has ruled that the matter is not a *prima facie* question of privilege." By the time Mr. Milloy will have raised the issue in the House, it will have been over 48 hours since I asked the question that has raised their ire. In fact, the government House leader and his staff had ample opportunity to review the Instant Hansard and check the documents, because they are searchable. All his staff had to do was copy my quote and search the different files. They would have found them in the files that are already disclosed in the public domain. There's no reason why Mr. Milloy needed 30 hours to bring the point of privilege to your attention.

On any points of privilege brought forward by the Ontario PC caucus, we have given notice expeditiously and introduced them on the next sessional day. Mr. Milloy had time to introduce his point of privilege yesterday, but he waited and did not introduce the point of privilege at his earliest possible opportunity. I ask that you find that the government House leader has not fulfilled the requirement and rule against this point of privilege.

In conclusion, I must say, and this is not the first time, I find it deplorable that the government House leader has brought this frivolous point of privilege forward to

distract from the context of the documents. It is an attempt to damage my good standing as an MPP and my reputation. As you can see, I only released redacted documents that were in the public domain already. I followed the committee's instructions and have not released any documents that were marked as confidential. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I listened carefully to the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, you have to indicate that. Point of order? On the same issue? The member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm not going to take too much more time on this particular issue, but I do want to draw attention to a few things. At the outset, I want to state categorically that the member for Nipissing is a champion for truth for the people of the province of Ontario. I wanted this Legislature and you, Mr. Speaker, to take into account what has transpired with that committee. As has been noted in the government's submission, the initial request for documentation came on June 11, 2013, through a motion. That motion wasn't fully complied with until just a few weeks ago. I think that's important to note because we have been going through this process for nearly a year in trying to extract the documents and to release the documents in an appropriate manner, and there was agreement on the approach that we were taking to do that. I state that because it speaks to the fact that there was ample time to actually go through and vet all those documents. It has already taken almost 10 months to get them fully out in the public domain. There shouldn't be the kinds of inconsistencies that have been very evident in the process of disclosure of this document.

I want to state that we have to understand that this is a very sensitive file. I understand that there are certain reasons why some documents need to be redacted. We have complied with that, we have followed those reasons, and we've respected the wishes of the government to keep those unredacted documents confidential. We have respected that. We have complied with it in due course.

I also want to mention that during the course of committee, we learned that the government and the public service have gone through a process for document disclosure on the basis of all the documents that we've requested in the various committees of this Legislature. They are now contracting an outside law firm to go through and vet all these documents. That's what they're doing. In the process of getting those things vetted, they're trying to standardize their approach for document disclosure and document release, and that's something that we are fully expected to comply with.

So if there is an issue that a document was unredacted that should have been redacted, or vice versa, the responsibility rests with the people doing the redactions, not with the member from Nipissing. I want you to be very clear, Mr. Speaker, that if there is an issue here with documents that weren't completely redacted, the government should take that up with the contracted firm that did

the redactions in the first place, not with the member from Nipissing, who was doing his job to uncover the truth for the people of Ontario.

The motion was very clear. It stated that all redacted documents be made public. The documents that were released by the member from Nipissing came from boxes that were clearly labelled "redacted." If there was some mistake, it is not the member from Nipissing's fault; it is the fault of the people who were doing the redactions. This is a completely frivolous matter, Mr. Speaker. They should be taking this matter up with the people who were doing this process.

In conclusion, we are dealing with only one thing here, and that is that sometimes the truth really hurts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have listened very carefully to all of the presentations. I thank all of the members for their contributions. Seeing the importance of this particular issue, I'll reserve my ruling for a later date. I thank all the members for their input.

At this time, there are no deferred votes. This House will stand recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1206 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming Mr. Jeremy Freed, editor-in-chief of Sharp magazine, one of Canada's leading men's magazines. Please join me in welcoming him today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know why he's here.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to share the results of my annual Oxford business survey. I want to thank all the business owners and operators who took time to share the challenges they are facing and their suggestions on how to create a climate that will help their business succeed.

Oxford businesses are tied up in government red tape: 73% of respondents said red tape has increased over the last five years, which is actually slightly higher than they reported in the last survey. One business reported they have to deal with 10 different ministries. Electricity rates are a challenge. Over 90% of the businesses said that they have been impacted by the increasing cost of hydro, and 43.5% said the impact on their business was significant.

It's clear that the government is still creating challenges for our businesses. Over 90% said they would be impacted by a gas tax increase. They are very clear that they cannot afford to have this government continue to increase the cost of operating a business in Ontario.

There is some positive news. The survey asked about the impact of legislation like the PC's Million Jobs Act,

which would ensure affordable energy rates, reduce trade barriers and red tape, lower taxes and train more skilled workers. Seventy-seven per cent of the businesses said legislation that addressed those challenges would help them grow their business.

Again, I want to thank everyone who took time to respond. I hope the government will listen and address these concerns in the upcoming budget to ensure our businesses can grow and grow jobs.

PARLIAMENT OAK PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Wayne Gates: Today I want to talk to you about Parliament Oak Public School in Niagara-on-the-Lake. I met with families who are trying to stop the closure of this historic local school. The school stands on the very site that was once occupied by this province's Legislature. The Act Against Slavery was signed there in 1793. Parliament Oak School is the heart of the community in Niagara-on-the-Lake. It is the last public school left in the old town.

Unfortunately, this historic school is slated for closure, even though the government just invested \$1.6 million in renovations and upgrades. As a result of the planned closure of Parliament Oak, the school board is looking at expending \$1.3 million in expansion plans for a new school that was built only two years ago.

This Liberal government used to praise the role that rural schools played in small-town Ontario. They used to be called the community hub. Local schools used to be important to this Liberal government. What's happened, Mr. Speaker?

When the Premier recently met with parents of students at Parliament Oak, she assured them she would work on the issue. Now it's time for the Premier to listen to local voices. The community, the parents, the lord mayor, the city council, the chamber of commerce and the government's own accommodation review committee all say the school should stay open. I urge the Premier to commit to keep Parliament Oak Public School open and use it as a model school for all Ontario.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I recently had the opportunity to host a pre-budget consultation in my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood. I know the Minister of Finance and his team are putting a tremendous amount of work into the upcoming budget. The minister and his parliamentary assistant have been a part of many consultations across this province. I know, as a member of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, we've also been involved in this process. For me, it was important to hold my own consultation so that my work is informed by the views of the people I was sent here to represent and to work for. Jobs for youth, transportation and infrastructure investments, and ensuring health care for our seniors in Ontario were all highlighted.

Being a strong voice for Scarborough-Guildwood at Queen's Park means providing forums like this for resi-

dents of my community. I look forward to sharing the results of my consultation, which I briefly touched on, with the minister and his team, and I look forward to the continued work of the Minister of Finance when it comes to charting our province's economic future.

MATHEMATICS EDUCATION

Mr. Rob Leone: I'd like to rise in this House to speak about math education in the province of Ontario. We spend \$8.5 billion per year more in education than we did in 2003. All the while, we have 250,000 fewer students in our schools, and our math scores have declined significantly. Since 2003, we have seen a number of international comparisons in the PISA and TIMSS math tests that have shown that our students are achieving less today than they did in 2003, when we left office. For example, on the PISA mathematics test, Ontario scores have declined from a high of 530 in 2003 to a low of 514 in 2012. On the PISA science test, scores declined from a high of 537 to 527 in 2012.

Parents across this province are deeply concerned about math education in the province of Ontario. That's why I was pleased to announce the PC Party's math achievement action plan to restore confidence in our math education in the province of Ontario. It focuses on the fundamentals like rote math skills; it talks about improving teaching excellence, and it talks about utilizing modern tools in a 21st-century education system.

I think all members of this Legislature would do well to review our math achievement action plan and work toward helping our students achieve better.

KYLE AND PAULA WATSON FAMILY

M^{me} France Gélinas: I rise today in the Legislature to ask for the assistance of my colleagues for a family in my riding. Paula and Kyle Watson are a Val Therese couple who have been dealing with many challenges for the last 14 years. Their twin boys, Ian and Scott, were born 10 weeks premature and have cerebral palsy. Ian and Scott have been confined to wheelchairs since childhood. Both are blind, deaf, quadriplegic, prone to epileptic seizures, and require gastric-tube feeding.

The Watson's 10-year-old modified van is the family workhorse. They use it all over, and they use it for frequent trips to Toronto for the boys' medical needs. The boys are getting bigger and they don't fit in the van anymore; they need to upsize. I'm sure everybody will understand that a family with two special-needs children doesn't have a lot of extra money around to buy a new van and pay to have it modified.

This is where all of you guys come in. I would like you to go to www.mobilityawarenessmonth.com—and enter big word: mobilityawarenessmonth.com—and enter "Kyle Watson" under the "Find a Local Hero" tab. The instructions are easy to follow. If the Watsons get the most votes, they get a new van, fully adapted for Ian and Scott's needs.

Mr. Speaker, I need everybody's help. If you know of anybody with a computer, you go to www.mobility-awarenessmonth.com and vote for Kyle Watson—a very deserving family. Thank you.

NOWRUZ

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Just a few minutes ago, at 12:57 p.m. today, spring began. Spring not only heralds warmer weather, we hope, but it marks the beginning of Nowruz, an ancient festival. It celebrates rebirth, hope, peace and prosperity. While Nowruz was established over 3,000 years ago and is based on the traditions of the Zoroastrian belief system, it is neither ethnic nor religious. In fact, it represents the new year in Iran and Afghanistan, as well as for practitioners of the Baha'i faith.

Almost 300,000 Ontarians from various ethnocultural and religious backgrounds celebrate Nowruz every year, many of whom reside in my great riding of Oak Ridges—Markham, including Iranians, Afghans, Azeris, Turks, Kurds, Zoroastrians, Baha'is and Ismailis.

In 2008, the member for Richmond Hill, the Honourable Reza Moridi, put forth a motion that made Ontario the first jurisdiction in Canada to recognize the first day of spring as Nowruz. The federal government followed suit a year later.

1310

During Nowruz, traditional customs including feasting, visiting friends and relatives, and gift-giving. Most importantly, it includes the decoration of the Haft Sinn table with seven items, each representing one of the seven angelic heralds of life: rebirth, health, happiness, prosperity, joy, patience and beauty.

I would like to wish everyone a happy Nowruz. Nowruz Etan Mobarak.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees: This is now the third time that I stand in this Legislature to speak to an issue that is of great concern to seniors and people with disabilities in Newmarket—Aurora and, in fact, throughout all of York region. I put it to the minister that it is her policy that will be responsible for removing the on-site personal care support for many of our vulnerable seniors throughout York region.

The minister responded, in a question staged by the member from Vaughan, to suggest that the challenge that I put to her about those services being cancelled as a result of her policy was wrong. I stand again here to say that it is, in fact, the policy of the Minister of Health that is responsible for that on-site personal care service being cancelled effective April 1.

It's because of that that I tabled a motion here in the House yesterday that calls on the government to reinstate those services and to direct the Central LHIN to commission an independent and objective commission to investigate and analyze the impact of the policy being proposed by the Minister of Health. I'm going to ask that

all members in this House support that motion when it's debated on May 8 to ensure that seniors and people with disabilities in York region are properly cared for.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M. John Fraser: Je suis ravi de me lever dans l'Assemblée aujourd'hui pour rendre hommage aux francophones non seulement en Ontario mais autour du monde. Nous célébrons aujourd'hui le 16^e anniversaire de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

Today we celebrate the 16th anniversary of the International Day of the Francophonie, a celebration of French language and cultures around the world.

En tant que pays bilingue, nous sommes très chanceux d'avoir deux langues qui nous relient à de nombreux autres pays.

This connection not only enhances our arts and culture, it also benefits our trade and economy. Cette connexion améliore non seulement nos arts et notre culture mais aussi notre commerce et notre économie.

Dans ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Sud, il y a plusieurs francophones qui sont nés en Afrique, en Asie et en Europe. Ils enrichissent notre communauté, et je les remercie pour leurs contributions.

JIM FLAHERTY

Mr. John O'Toole: My speech today is about a very good friend of mine and of this House. I rise to pay tribute to my friend and our colleague Jim Flaherty. Over the past several years, Jim has had a steady hand guiding Canada through our most challenging economic times since the Great Depression. He's been the only finance minister to serve in the Harper government.

In this House, Jim Flaherty served as the MPP for Durham Centre and later Whitby-Ajax. He was a former finance minister of Ontario and a very successful finance minister, as well as Deputy Premier. He also held the portfolios of Attorney General; native affairs; enterprise, opportunity and innovation; labour; Solicitor General; and correctional services. It was my privilege to serve as Jim Flaherty's parliamentary assistant when he was the Minister of Finance, where we challenged many issues.

Despite his demanding roles in cabinet, he has always been optimistic, friendly and willing to help our neighbours, his community and a local politician like myself. Former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney, now governor of the Bank of England said, "Jim Flaherty has exhibited the very best of Canadian virtues in service to" his country and the people.

With his retirement from his duties as federal finance minister, I am confident the members will wish Jim, Christine—who is the member for that riding now—and their sons Galen, John and Quinn all the best in Jim's future plans.

I personally thank you, Jim. I consider you the most successful public servant ever to come from the region of Durham.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Chan: I believe, Speaker, that we have unanimous content to wear ribbons to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Culture, Tourism and Sport is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons for this special day. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MPP SALARY FREEZE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE GEL DES TRAITEMENTS DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr. Sousa moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 177, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act/ Projet de loi 177, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

VOLUNTARY BLOOD DONATIONS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE DON DE SANG VOLONTAIRE

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to ensure that blood and blood constituents are donated freely / Projet de loi 178, Loi visant à assurer la gratuité du don de sang et de composants sanguins.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'll give my remarks during ministers' statements.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge on a point of order.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find unanimous consent to reserve four seats in the front row on the left-hand side for government staff and four seats on the right-hand side of the room for opposition staffers in each committee room of the Legislative Assembly, and I'd like to move that.

Interjection: It's out of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not going to rule it out of order. What I'm going to suggest to the member is that I'm seized with this issue already. I am dealing with it, and I would appreciate the opportunity for me to complete my seizing of the moment. If the member would remove that, I would appreciate it.

I recognize the member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'll withdraw that motion then, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member from Cambridge for his consideration.

1320

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MEMBERS' COMPENSATION

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm pleased to rise today for the introduction of the MPP Salary Freeze Act, 2014. Since the beginning of the worst economic recession since the Great Depression, the people of Ontario have taken great strides to help the province of Ontario regain its footing. We are all in this together. In order to help grow the economy, this government has been focused on reforming public services to control spending while maintaining and improving the quality of public services. Our efforts have proved to provide great results.

For the past two years, growth in program expenditures overall has been held to less than 1%. Last year, total government spending fell for the first time in more than a decade. Ontario public service sector wage settlements continue to be below the average of private sector, municipal sector and federal public sector settlements.

We're proud of these accomplishments, yet we know there's more to do. This government remains committed to eliminating the deficit by 2017-18. To do so, we're taking a measured and disciplined approach to balancing the budget while continuing to invest in public services that Ontario families rely on.

We're accomplishing this through a variety of measures, including making key investments in infrastructure, focusing on enhancing skills and training, assisting our youth in obtaining jobs, building our knowledge-based economy and supporting our small businesses. But the fact remains that, with over half of all government expenditures going towards compensation, we cannot achieve our goals and grow the economy without taking measures to restrain growth in public salaries.

In this area, I am proud to say that this government has led by example. In 2009, we introduced wage freezes for all Ontario MPPs. It was the right thing to do, to show our commitment to eliminating the deficit, in part by restricting the growth of compensation in the public sector. In 2010, we extended the salary freeze for MPPs for an additional two years. In 2012, we extended it

further for two years, bringing the total to five years. Once again, it was the right thing to do.

Now, as part of this government's ongoing commitment to responsible fiscal management, I am proud to stand here today to introduce this bill, the MPP Salary Freeze Act, 2014. This act, if passed, would extend the pay freeze for all MPPs until after the budget is balanced in 2017-18. No pay increases would take effect until April 1, 2019, after the public accounts confirm a balanced budget. The government is continuing to lead by example, as it has been consistent and clear that there is no room in the budget to fund incremental increases in compensation.

Our government will continue to take a determined and disciplined approach to eliminating the deficit. Ontario's is the leanest government in Canada. But with over half of the budget going to the cost of compensation, we must all do our part.

I look forward to the discussion that this legislation will generate on this important matter, and I appreciate the attention that I know members will give it.

BLOOD DONATION

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I rise in the House today to introduce the Voluntary Blood Donations Act that, if passed, would prohibit payments to donors for their blood and plasma, a component of blood. Before I continue with my remarks, I very much want to acknowledge a number of safe blood advocates and family members of victims of the tainted blood scandal who are with us today in the House. I'm pleased to welcome Ann Harrington, Ian DeAbreu, David Harvey, Mike McCarthy, Kat Lanteigne, Antonia Swann, Graeme Ball and Karen Plater. They represent the thousands of people who are supportive of this. I also very much want to acknowledge some staff from my ministry who have worked very hard to bring this proposed legislation forward and who are also joining us in the House today. Louis Dimitracopoulos, Mahindan Kanakaratnam and Vinessa Redford, thank you so much for the work you do.

The principle of voluntary donation is critical to Canada's blood system. It was enshrined in our blood system after the tainted blood scandal of the 1980s. The Commission of Inquiry on the Blood System in Canada, also known as the Krever commission, upheld the principle of voluntary donation in its 1997 report.

The commission recommended that donors of blood and plasma should not be paid for their donations, except in rare circumstances. It also recommended that Canada's national blood system be administered by a single, integrated national blood service.

I stand strongly in support of Canada's voluntary blood donation system. I'm proud of our volunteer donors, and I strongly support Ontarians as they continue giving blood and plasma voluntarily.

But as members may have heard, Health Canada has received a licence application from a private, for-profit

company seeking to open plasma collection sites in Ontario that would pay people for their plasma, which would likely be sold for a profit to manufacture plasma protein products for the international market.

Let's be clear: This company would not benefit Ontario patients, but there is a risk, jeopardizing our voluntary donation system. That's why I wrote to the federal health minister in March 2013, asking Health Canada to refrain from granting approval of any new paid donor blood or plasma clinics until there has been an open consultation with provincial health regulators, care providers, Canadian Blood Services and Canadians. I also reiterated my position that the integrity of our voluntary blood donor system must not be compromised.

Unfortunately, the federal government decided to leave the decision to permit or prohibit payment for blood or plasma to the provinces. As a result, I recently wrote to my provincial and territorial colleagues, encouraging them to take a pan-Canadian approach in opposing paid plasma collection anywhere in the country.

Ontario's position is crystal clear: We stand firmly against payment for blood or plasma donations. We hope other jurisdictions agree.

However, until now, no legislation has been proposed in Ontario that would prohibit paying for blood donations. As a first step, we've already amended regulations to strengthen licensing requirements for labs and specimen collection centres to prohibit paying donors for their blood or blood constituents, including reimbursement of expenses or other forms of compensation.

Today, I'm taking the next step by introducing new legislation, the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014, that would, if passed, protect the integrity of the province's public, voluntarily blood donor system. This bill would prohibit all individuals or corporations from providing payment or offering to provide payment to a blood or plasma donor. Likewise, under this bill, donors would be prohibited from accepting any payment in return for their donation.

The proposed legislation would also amend the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act to authorize regulations to make it clear that the activity of blood and plasma collection must be licensed under this act. It would expand the public interest grounds to deny a licence for new blood collection facilities, and it would strengthen our lab enforcement regime so we can take quick and decisive action in case of violations.

The stand we are taking upholds the recommendations that came out of the Krever commission report.

Over the past year, I have heard from many health care organizations and individual Ontarians, including tainted blood victims, who are opposed to private, for-profit plasma collection. Mike McCarthy, who has joined us today, is the former vice-president of the Canadian Hemophilia Society. Here's what Mike McCarthy had to say: "The Ontario government's decision to ban paid plasma clinics is a great relief to Canadians who suffered from tainted blood through past mistakes. Ontario is demonstrating it has heeded the lessons of the past and is

committed to protecting our volunteer blood supply system."

Hematologist Dr. Lois Shepherd, a pathology professor at Queen's University, said, "For me, the bigger concern is that we do rely on volunteer blood donors in Canada, and if we're attracting younger people to be paid donors as plasma donors, they are going to be pulled out of a population of people that might potentially be committed red cell whole blood donors."

1330

I agree with them wholeheartedly. There is no identified need for such a parallel system in Canada, since we are fortunate to have a well-managed, centralized system, with strong quality assurance and oversight measures. It is now recognized as one of the safest in the world.

I have full confidence in Canada's national blood system, and I know that Canadian Blood Services has the ability to successfully manage the blood and blood product supply for Ontarians. More importantly, we must not allow our cherished health care system and voluntary blood donation system to be compromised.

I want to assure the members that this decision to prohibit payment for blood or plasma in the province would not negatively impact or reduce the supply or availability of these products for Ontarians. We all know that blood donation saves lives. I encourage all Ontarians to donate blood if they are able to do so.

We are taking this strong step against the paid blood donation to maintain the integrity of the voluntary blood donation system, and that's something that I believe all members can stand behind. I urge all members to support our proposed legislative changes.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise to remind my colleagues that tomorrow, March 21, is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. I spoke on this day last year, as did my predecessors before me. This is not a day that we should ever allow to pass without observance.

On March 21, 1960, in Sharpeville, South Africa, police opened fire and killed 69 people. Those people had been demonstrating, peacefully, against their country's apartheid "pass law." This was an internal passport system designed to make it easier to segregate the population and limit the movements of black South Africans.

Six years after what will be remembered as the Sharpeville Massacre, the United Nations proclaimed March 21 as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In so doing, the UN called on the international community to increase its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. I am sad to say that the reason we are still observing this day, more than 50 years later, is because there is so much more work to be done.

It happens that in the past year the world lost a man who could certainly have testified to that. The late

Nelson Mandela died this past December. At the time of the Sharpeville Massacre, he was on trial in South Africa for high treason, which is another way of saying that he was on trial for being a member of the anti-apartheid African National Congress. He was found not guilty on that charge, but as the world knows, he was tried again and jailed for 27 years. He survived and emerged to become the president of South Africa, and a worldwide symbol of the fight against racism.

Speaker, Nelson Mandela did not live in Ontario. If he had lived in Ontario today, he would not have faced the trials that he faced back then. If Nelson Mandela had lived in Ontario, he would have observed how people from over 200 countries, speaking more than 250 languages, can live and work peacefully together.

Since 1962, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the first in Canada, has prohibited discrimination on several grounds, including race. In keeping with the spirit of that code, our government made it clear last fall that Ontario has no intentions to prohibit or restrict freedom of expression and religion in public places. This House later affirmed that decision unanimously.

Never before in the history of this planet has a place like Ontario existed. The incredible, beautiful diversity of race, culture and religion that we have here in the province of Ontario is the envy of many nations around the globe.

Our free and progressive society has given us Lincoln Alexander, novelist Lawrence Hill, singer Molly Johnson, hockey player Nazem Kadri and many, many others, yet even in Ontario, we must continue to remember the struggles of those who fought for the freedom that we enjoy here today. We must continue the work that they started, so that one day racial discrimination will be a distant memory in Ontario's past, so that one day, we will be able to say, as the late Nelson Mandela did say, "Let freedom reign. The sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

MEMBERS' COMPENSATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'll be responding to the salary freeze act. Speaker, all of us in Ontario have a part to play in turning our province around and getting our finances headed in the right direction. Sadly, this government continues to feel that it's more important to appear to be doing something than taking real action. Our caucus continues to support an across-the-board wage freeze so the burden is shared equally. Instead, this government's failed wage freeze saw increases given in eight out of 10 contracts over the past years.

This government continues to tinker around the edges and, as we proved through our own internal documents this week, has no plans to balance the budget. This government's spending and deficits are out of control and they're causing Ontarians to lose jobs. Debt and deficits are a major and immediate threat to our province's ability

to attract more jobs as high taxes and user fees drive businesses out of the province. Without urgent action, Ontario will lose more jobs and government will not be able to afford things that we care about, like health and education programs.

We need a government that will implement a turn-around plan immediately. Our caucus is prepared to do our part. Unfortunately, this government, propped up by the NDP, have failed to do theirs.

BLOOD DONATION

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm responding to the Voluntary Blood Donations Act. I want to acknowledge the tabling of the Voluntary Blood Donations Act. It's very important legislation that is difficult for me to comment on, having not seen the bill or had an opportunity to debate its contents in caucus.

Two comments: (1) Our laws governing the blood supply must be unambiguous and principled. (2) This legislation should have been debated long before now in anticipation of the globalization of the plasma marketplace.

The opening of a Toronto clinic by a private company with a plan to harvest plasma from Canadians and pay them \$25 has raised serious questions. I remember how shocked I was to learn that 30,000 people unknowingly received blood that was infected with HIV and hepatitis C in 1980—thousands had their lives cut short—from a blood supply system we were assured was safe. What we didn't know was that blood purchased for money from disreputable sources in the United States had infected our blood supply. The Krever commission recommended against paying donors for their blood.

Above all, we must ensure that trust and faith in our blood supply system is maintained.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Todd Smith: Tomorrow we'll celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This day was brought about because in 1960 police fired upon and killed 69 protestors in Sharpeville, South Africa. The protestors were speaking out against racist apartheid laws at the time. The day was proclaimed in 1966 by the United Nations in commemoration of the protestors who died on that day.

As the father of two little girls of Caribbean Canadian heritage, I have a very real and very personal appreciation for the importance of recognizing days like this. I'm thankful that my little girls have had the opportunity to grow up here in Ontario and in Canada where they would have the opportunity to go to school and play hockey and soccer and grow up with kids from many different cultural backgrounds.

This day helps us to celebrate what makes our country great. We're a nation full of immigrants. We're a nation

of people who came here with the hope of seeking a better future.

As we celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination tomorrow, we must remember from a cultural perspective that we do have a bright future to look forward to, and there is still some work to do.

1340

It's unfortunate that we still have discrimination in our province that exists. In our province today, in 2014, the Ontario Federation of Labour president referred to Ukrainian protesters currently demanding democracy as fascists and thugs and anti-Semites. These comments are still being made in our province today, and it's completely unacceptable. I call on all parties in this Legislature to denounce this kind of vitriolic and hateful talk in our province.

BLOOD DONATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I rise to talk about the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, an act that is so, so, so late.

Since Health Canada finished its consultation on the issue and tabled its report on July 26, 2013, the minister knew that she needed to act. How do I know that? Well, I know she was aware that she needed to act because I talked to her about it on a number of occasions. I and many other people, some of them sitting in the gallery right now, wrote to her about the need to act and to act now. I put questions on the order paper, begging her to act on this issue and to ban paying for plasma or any other blood product. I asked her questions in the House. I suppose that I should have hired pyrotechnics or maybe a banner at the end of the tail of a plane to get her attention on this issue. But it didn't matter what I and many other people were doing. She did not act. She did not act until now.

Do you know what "now" means, Mr. Speaker? It means that we now have Canadian Plasma Resources, that has signed a lease right here in downtown Toronto, on Adelaide Street—number 82, to be precise. They have spent \$6 million on leasehold improvements; on purchases of all of the equipment they need; on recruitment, hiring and training of 30 staff; and on recruitment of donors. They have opened their doors; they have welcomed their first donors.

Why didn't the minister act before? With her delay in putting forward this bill, she failed at her most important task of all, and that is to protect our health care system. The minister talked about risk. The risks are huge. Once you attack the trust in our health care system, you attack the foundation.

What is clear right now is that we have this private, for-profit company that is already open. They have started to welcome donors to their facility.

Everybody talked about the Krever report that was done. That was 30,000 people who got infected when our blood system was not looked after carefully. If the minister has but one task that she needs to do, it is to protect

our health care system. Right now, by those delays, she has failed in her basic responsibility to protect our health care system.

This bill could have been introduced in September. It could have been, and should have been, introduced in October. It could have been, and should have been, introduced in November and December—you know where I'm going, Mr. Speaker—but it was not. She waited until the clinic was open and the \$6 million was already spent.

We knew all along. Those people came to see me; they went to see her. They told her and they told me, "We are opening up. We don't think there is a problem. We are forging ahead."

I realize that I've taken the time of my colleague who also needs to talk. I needed to get this off my chest.

This bill is so, so late. Damage has already been done to the donors, and this is a real shame.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Michael Prue: With the minute or so I have left, I'd like to first talk about the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which is going to take place tomorrow. As has been said, this is a commemoration of the 1960 massacre at Sharpeville.

But I think what has not been said, and what needs to be said here today, is that Nelson Mandela, a very great man, when he was bringing the Constitution to the people of South Africa, went to Sharpeville—that's where the Constitution was proclaimed—and he stated the following, and I don't think truer words could ever be said: "Out of the many Sharpevilles which haunt our history was born the unshakable determination that respect for human life, liberty and well-being must be enshrined as rights beyond the power of any force to diminish."

This is the international year—the United Nations has said our focus this year should be on leaders and leaders' ability to influence anti-racist activities and thoughts and deeds.

We are the people who make the laws; we are the people, hopefully, who provide guidance; and we are the people who serve as role models. It is our responsibility to ensure we do that in all of our actions and deeds every day so that any discrimination that does exist in Ontario is outlawed.

There's not time for me to talk about the other issue. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're right. I thank all members for their statements.

The Minister of Finance is seeking a point of order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: A point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent that the order for second reading of Bill 177, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, be immediately called and that the question be put on the motion for second reading of the bill without debate or amendment, and that the bill be ordered for third reading, and that the order for third reading of Bill

177 be immediately called and that the question on the motion for third reading of the bill be put without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Sousa is seeking unanimous consent that the order for second reading of Bill 177, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispensed.

Unanimous consent is being sought. Do we agree?

I think I heard a no.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

BLOOD DONATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas we, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

“Thirty thousand Canadians were infected with HIV and hepatitis C via tainted blood in Canada and it killed thousands of Canadians and destroyed families.

“We spent \$17 million on a publicly funded federal inquiry, namely the Krever inquiry, that revealed blood from a paid donor system was a key factor in Canadians receiving tainted blood.

“Billions were spent on top of the inquiry in compensation to those who received tainted blood and their families in part due to Canada’s reliance on blood from paid donors.

“The Krever inquiry recommended that blood be treated as a public resource and that Canada should not move to a paid blood donor system.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Your petitioners request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not issue or approve a licence to Canadian Plasma Resources. Further, we request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario implement legislation that ensures no new paid blood donor clinics be allowed to open in Ontario. It is the responsibility of Canadian Blood Services to oversee blood collection and plasma collection in our country, and our blood plasma is not meant to be a commodity that is bought and sold.”

I fully support this petition, and the tens of thousands of people who signed it, and give it to Jonah.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario government has raised minimum wage by 50% since 2003 and will increase it to

\$11, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada, on June 1;

“Whereas both families and businesses in Ontario deserve a fair and predictable approach to setting the minimum wage;

“Whereas indexing minimum wage to CPI is supported by business, labour and anti-poverty groups from across Ontario as the best way to achieve that;

“Whereas indexing ensures minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, providing fairness for workers and their families and predictability for businesses to plan and stay competitive;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014.”

I fully agree with the petition, and I will give my petition to page Zohaib.

1350

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario’s tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

“Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

“Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

“Whereas the latest policies from the McGuinty-Wynne government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario; and

“Whereas the Liberals and NDP defeated an opposition day motion by the PC caucus which was intended to abolish the College of Trades;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers.”

I affix my signature in support.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“December 9, 2013, was a precedent-setting day in this Legislature for Ontario’s most vulnerable citizens. Premier Kathleen Wynne gave a heartfelt and official apology challenging all Ontarians ‘to be led by our sense of moral purpose before all else’ when she publicly, on behalf of the people of Ontario, took responsibility for the profound suffering of the former residents of

Huronion, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres 'who were deeply harmed and continue to bear the scars and the consequences.'

"Whereas the institutional model of care at each of these centres has been acknowledged in the public apology to have been deeply flawed whereby residents 'suffered neglect and abuse within the very system that was meant to provide them care'; and

"Whereas it was acknowledged that former residents 'were forcibly restrained, left in unbearable seclusion, separated from their families and robbed of their potential, their comfort, safety and their dignity'; and

"Whereas all of the class actions for former residents at Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres have reached settlement agreements with the province for a combined total of \$67.7 million; and

"Whereas a \$67.7-million settlement is wholly inadequate as compensation to the thousands of former residents and their families to redress the long-term debilitating impact of this harm; and

"Whereas all legal costs of \$15.6 million are being taken from the combined settlement total before any compensation is paid to the former residents;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that Premier Kathleen Wynne be led by her sense of moral purpose and use her power as Premier to pay the legitimate legal costs of Koskie Minsky LLP from Toronto who acted on behalf of the Huronia, Southwestern and Rideau Regional Centre class members, from sources over and above the combined \$67.7-million settlement."

I couldn't agree more. I sign this and give it to Kathryn to be delivered to the table.

GREENBELT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition this afternoon to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the town of Oakville is studying further land use in the vicinity of Third Line and Bronte Road in Oakville known as the Merton lands; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario is the majority landowner in the study area; and

"Whereas despite the objections of the previous Harris-Hudak Conservative government, the Glenorchy Conservation Area was preserved as 400 hectares of natural area for generations to come; and

"Whereas despite the initial objection of the town of Oakville and region of Halton planning department Glenorchy Conservation Area became the first addition to Ontario's greenbelt; and

"Whereas Ontario's greenbelt is the largest permanent greenbelt in the world, protecting nearly two million acres from development; and

"Whereas residents of Oakville want the natural heritage area of the Merton lands added to Ontario's greenbelt; and

"Whereas the Tim Hudak Progressive Conservative Party voted against the formation of Ontario's greenbelt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the request from MPP Kevin Flynn and the mayor and council of the town of Oakville to include the addition of these lands in Ontario's greenbelt."

Obviously, I agree with this, will sign it and send it to the table with Divya.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I have affixed my signature as I am in agreement.

RANKED BALLOTING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, on June 11, 2013, Toronto city council passed a motion requesting a ranked ballot for municipal elections; and

"Whereas Bill 166 will strengthen local democracy within the city of Toronto;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 166, the Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act, 2014, which was introduced by Mitzie Hunter, MPP (Scarborough-Guildwood) and passed second reading on March 6, 2014."

I will sign this petition and give it to page Calvin.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas small businesses are part of the economic and social fabric of communities across Ontario; and

"Whereas small business owners have stated that excessive regulations and red tape have led to decreased productivity, and higher costs for small businesses in Ontario; and

"Whereas, according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, small businesses pay the highest per-employee cost to comply with government regulations; and

"Whereas small business owners have cited excessive regulation as a barrier to growth for small businesses in Ontario; and

"Whereas entrepreneurs have asserted that complex and excessive regulations are discouraging people from starting up small businesses in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To take immediate action to cut small business red tape by eliminating excessive and redundant regulation with the goal of encouraging the growth of existing small businesses and aiding people in starting new businesses in Ontario."

I totally agree with this petition, and I'll send it to the desk with Caroline.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

I sign my signature to this petition and give it to page Nick to deliver to the table.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the Ontario government has raised minimum wage by 50% since 2003 and will increase it to \$11, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada, on June 1; and

"Whereas both families and businesses in Ontario deserve a fair and predictable approach to setting the minimum wage; and

"Whereas indexing minimum wage to CPI is supported by business, labour and anti-poverty groups from across Ontario as the best way to achieve that;

"Whereas indexing ensures minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, providing fairness for workers and their families and predictability for businesses to plan and stay competitive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014."

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of Leo Subotich that reads as follows:

"Whereas MPAC failed to comply with legislation, international standards and methods recognized by the courts;

"Whereas amendments to the legislation since 2004 have resulted in the weakening of public interests due to ambiguities and interpretations;

"Whereas the public has identified many problems with over-assessments by MPAC, but these over-assessments have not been appropriately investigated;

"Whereas the escalation process and appeals process is costly, unfair and ineffective;

"Whereas key facts and evidence are being withheld or ignored that have resulted in costly delays and undermined the public's confidence in MPAC assessments;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to establish a committee to make inquiries into: (a) the applications of the respective home statutes by MPAC, IPC/ON and the ARB; (b) a complete performance review and financial audit of MPAC and ARB; (c) make recommendations to improve the escalation and appeal process; (d) estimate the financial impacts on individual homeowners and fiscal circumstances of taxing jurisdictions, and; (e) make findings of misconduct or wrongdoings."

I'm pleased to sign this and present it to page Anthony, one of the new pages here.

1400

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario. It was collected by Karl Braeker.

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently they don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada—including the three territories—where our Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes;"

They petition the assembly “to expand the Ombudsman’s mandate to include Ontario’s long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Zohaib to bring it to the Clerk.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. Todd Smith: It’s a pleasure to be able to present this rather substantial-sized petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in the province; and

“Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province; and

“Whereas in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

“Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians.”

I agree with this and will send it to the table with page Musthaf.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT POLICIES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I move that in the opinion of this House, the Management Board of Cabinet’s procurement directive and broader public sector procurement directive should be amended to protect the interests of business owners in Ontario by ensuring that if a construction business that performs work for the government, a government agency or a broader public sector entity

willfully or negligently fails to pay a subcontractor or supplier in respect of their work, that business shall be barred from submitting any further bids on or doing further work for the government, government agencies and broader public sector entities until the payment has been made.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I bring forward this private member’s motion to protect hard-working business owners in Ontario, specifically our subcontractors and suppliers who have been left with unpaid bills by large infrastructure firms working under government contract.

By way of example, what’s so unfair about what prompted this resolution is that there was no question or dispute about the quality of work or the quality of service or materials provided; the company just stopped paying its local suppliers and then word got out that the company was bidding on other government work elsewhere in the province. This resolution came about because of what happened to Windsor-area companies involved on the Herb Gray Parkway project.

I think the motion is simple in design. Construction businesses that get the contract for work on government projects, and decide at some point to not pay their subcontractors or suppliers, should be barred from submitting any further bids to or doing any further work for the government and/or its government agencies, such as Infrastructure Ontario.

It’s simple. It’s the right thing to do. It protects businesses. It protects families. It protects those trying to make a living in Ontario. In reality, it protects those who are the backbone of our economy.

In other words, Speaker, if you’re being paid for government work, you can’t stiff business owners on one project and still expect to bid on other government work.

Business owners operate on guiding principles. Call it “willing buyer, willing provider.” When a company needs something done, they seek and find a supplier. When the materials arrive or the work is done, payment is made. It’s a fair transaction.

But when a company doesn’t play by the rules and wilfully decides not to pay its bills for the goods and services received, then we run into problems. The banks get involved. The credit unions get involved. They get nervous about a cash flow problem. People get upset. Sometimes lawyers get involved and, as we know, when that happens, things can get messy real quick.

But, even more outrageous, the situation becomes much less acceptable when the issue arises from a government infrastructure project. Business people in this province have a real expectation that when working on a government project, the government can be trusted to pay its bills or to exercise some leverage to insist that the government money flowing into a project flows downhill to the subcontractors on the job—the little guys, if you will. Because of the government’s past reputation,

business owners expect they'll be paid in a timely fashion. That's the way it used to be.

I know my friend the member from Vaughan has his hands full at the moment, ushering through the legislative process a private member's bill calling for prompt payment legislation. This will help in some situations but not all, and not in the case that launched this resolution, the one originating because of work deficiencies in girders being built and installed along the Herb Gray Parkway.

Again, the bottom line of my resolution is that companies which have the privilege of being awarded large government infrastructure contracts should not be awarded further government work if they have walked away from their financial obligations on another government job.

Unpaid bills threaten the survival of local Ontario job creators. If you don't pay your bills in one community, you shouldn't be awarded work in another by this government. The buck has to stop somewhere, and this is why I've put forward this motion.

I hope I'm seen as doing this in a non-partisan way. I want our local suppliers to finally be paid. I don't care who gets the credit for this. I'm trying to help these small companies stay afloat.

I'm asking the Management Board of Cabinet to make amendments, to be seen to take an interest in the discussion and to make the necessary changes to the procurement directives and the broader public sector procurement directives, in order to offer protection to these businesses and to their employees.

I'm told procurement by the Ontario public sector is controlled primarily by these two directives and not a legislative act. This duty is delegated to the Management Board of Cabinet. Under the Management Board of Cabinet Act, the Management Board of Cabinet has the power and the duty to initiate and supervise the development of management practices and systems for the efficient operation of any part of Ontario's public service.

We need a procurement policy in Ontario that has some teeth and that doesn't let companies continue to be awarded good-paying government work without paying their bills on government projects in another part of the province or, for that matter, on another government project just a mile down the road from where they stopped paying their local suppliers.

Speaker, as you know, I've approached the Minister of Infrastructure on this issue during question period on a number of occasions. Personally, I like the minister. I consider him to be a man of integrity. But he says his hands are tied and his powers are somewhat limited under existing rules.

1410

What I'm offering today may be the solution the minister has been hoping for—I certainly hope so. Speaker, this is a big deal in Windsor and Essex county and in Chatham and Kent. I'm told by others in this House that this has been an issue in other areas of the province on other contracts involving other major com-

panies. That has been a big deal in the not-so-distant past, I'm told.

Windsor area business owners have called the minister's office repeatedly on this issue, and not a lot has been seen to be done. I've said it before in this House, and I'll say it again, because of the existing rules, the sad, unfortunate, inexcusable fact is that the government has failed to protect the local business people who were asked to supply goods and services to this big multinational corporation, the company that was handed a big part of the contract for this huge project, the biggest infrastructure road-building project in the history of our great province.

Let me remind everyone in the House today, the money for this project comes from Ontario taxpayers. It's collected by the government. It's doled out in increments to the foreign multinational companies which the government selected to do the work. These multinational companies have a duty and an obligation to pay their bills. Yet when one of them says no, when they stop paying their bills, hanging a host of local companies out to dry, the government has so far refused to step in and stand up for the local business community.

Let me tell you quickly about who these companies are. Gunther Haas owns a manufacturing company called Waltron Trailers in Ridgeway. He lives in Windsor. He was a supplier of goods and services to Freyssinet Canada since the early stages of construction on the Herb Gray Parkway. Gunther has outstanding invoices totalling more than \$56,000 to date for materials and supplies used on the project. He has not been successful in his attempts to recover those funds.

Let me tell you about another individual, Dave Snyder. Dave owns Jake's Crane Service in Windsor. He's a good guy. His company has supplied services to Freyssinet Canada as well. He's owed more than \$95,000, and he has an outstanding invoice there since June 2013.

Another company, R.J. Cyr Ltd., was hired by Freyssinet Canada to perform work on the girders for the Herb Gray Parkway. Invoices for work performed were sent in April 2013. That will soon be one year ago. In total, R.J. Cyr is owed approximately \$13,000. The company has called Freyssinet continuously since that time with no luck, no favourable response, just a deaf ear.

Let me tell you about my good friend Charlie Hotham. Charlie is a well-established building materials supplier in Windsor. He owns Hotham Building Materials. He has been in business a long time. He has a great reputation. He's a former city councillor. He provides quality building materials at a good price. Look him up, Speaker.

He recently said in a Windsor Star article, "The hardship caused by this outstanding balance is paramount. We're a small local business that employs 10 families with spouses and children who rely on us to make the company effective.

"You are talking about over \$100,000 that we are owed. That's large for me to carry. Banks gets nervous, employees get nervous."

Despite assurances that the minister was on top of the situation, the banks keep calling, the suppliers keep expressing their concerns. The employees keep looking for assurances that their jobs will be secure and that they'll still be able to put food on their tables.

This government is perceived by the small business community as sitting on this file, and now, Speaker, sitting silent because of the threat of legal action. I'm calling on the House to take action. Otherwise, this government may see several of these Ontario business owners go out of business.

I should also point out that I spoke to many infrastructure stakeholders who are supportive of this motion. For example, Jim Lyons, the executive director of the Windsor Construction Association, was quick to add his support. He says the motion brings much-needed attention to a serious problem for business owners who provide good-quality products and services, that are left scrambling to make ends meet when their payment is delayed or withheld. Jim hopes that the government moves quickly on the motion, and so do I. I spoke this afternoon with representatives from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario; I'm told they're behind this resolution as well.

This is the right thing to do. It's the right time to do it. The intent is honourable. It's a pressure tactic to force a resolution so that local business owners, job creators, get to stay in business. I look to all members of the House for your support on this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to this motion. I have to agree—I'm sure all of us in this House would agree—that businesses should be paid what they're owed. We all agree that we want all our businesses to stay afloat and that we want our businesses to succeed. In fact, long before the member opposite tabled this motion, the member from Vaughan, as he indicated, introduced an actual bill to address this issue. I'm glad to see that they're following our example at bringing something forward. But we know that this motion won't actually solve the problem at hand. This motion will not result in a resolution for the companies that the member has referenced, regardless of what the member says in this House or in a press release.

While bills become timeless laws, motions are non-binding and an opinion of the day. I know the member hasn't been here for long, but I'm sure he knows that the motion is purely symbolic and potentially aimed at scoring political points.

I find it quite interesting that this motion is coming forward from the third party, considering that yesterday they chastised the Conservatives for exactly the same thing. The member from Timmins—James Bay tweeted, "Surprise! Tories are up to same old games, nothing new hear. Opposition day motions are non binding."

The NDP House leader is correct in his assessment. Unfortunately, it seems the member from Windsor—Tecumseh has chosen to play politics with this issue instead of putting forward something constructive.

I'm especially disappointed that the NDP attempt to paint the \$1.5-billion investment in Windsor as something negative. Ever since that parkway was first announced, the NDP has voted against it. If they had their way, work on this critical parkway would never have started.

In the 2009-10 and 2010-11 Ontario budgets, our government committed close to a billion dollars for this parkway. The NDP voted against this commitment. They voted against the investment in Windsor. They voted against creating thousands of jobs in Windsor. They voted against making it easier for businesses to move goods throughout the province, and they voted against keeping residential roads safe for our children.

The member from Windsor—Tecumseh should ask his leader why she voted against this project; why the NDP didn't believe in a project that is not only creating jobs, but will connect neighbourhoods and add 300 acres of green space; why they don't think local businesses should have the opportunity to reach global markets—talking about supporting business—and why they think drivers, young and old, in Windsor-Essex should have to dodge large semis when they're driving in their neighbourhoods.

This project is in my backyard. I drive it regularly when I'm home, and each time I marvel at the scope and complexity of this project. I've met with local parkway contractors on numerous occasions, and I agree that they provide quality service. We have fantastic contractors and suppliers in our region.

They're extremely thankful that we've had this investment, because over the last few years, as you know, Speaker, unemployment in Windsor—we were hit with the recession, and this parkway certainly created much-needed jobs in our area. These contractors have created thousands of jobs and reinvested millions of dollars in our community. I certainly have seen the positive impact this has had on the local economy.

It's unfortunate that we can't understand the complexity of these large-scale projects. When I first heard that local contractors were owed money for this project, I immediately brought this to the attention of the Minister of Transportation.

I don't believe in playing political games; I believe in working hard and finding solutions. At the end of the day, going for headlines and bringing forward a symbolic motion doesn't really achieve anything. I've met with the Minister of Transportation, the chief engineer and the Windsor Essex Mobility Group, because that's the way to work together toward results.

1420

This parkway, you may know, is named after the Right Honourable Herb Gray, a road named for an amazing representative that I had the great pleasure to work with and learn from. Every day, I'm reminded of the example he set of standing up for constituents and getting results for Windsor.

I'm fortunate to serve in a cabinet with some of the finest representatives in this province. On a daily basis, I

have the privilege of meeting with them to bring the views and concerns of my community to the table. I did this when it came to creating jobs in the manufacturing and agri-food sector and when it came to protecting and expanding cancer services for our region.

Nobody is going to disagree that all businesses and workers should be paid in a timely manner, and that they deserve to receive the money they're owed. I'm sure the member from Vaughan will speak to this in his remarks. We know there's a bill currently before the House that addresses this issue. Bill 69, the Prompt Payment Act, was introduced by that member and sets out a schedule by which subcontractors can ensure they get paid.

As the NDP House leader said yesterday, opposition motions are nothing more than political games. It's just unfortunate that the member opposite has not put forward an item of substance that could actually solve the problem we're talking about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I applaud the member from Windsor—Tecumseh on this bill. I think it's a good initiative, and we support this bill. Prompt payment in the MUSH sector is an important principle, and I believe this government can take steps. There are many excuses, like he's heard, that they can't make changes, but surely those changes are through.

We have some concerns out there in the municipal sector—I came from the municipal sector. There need to be tools to protect municipalities and school boards and such for good quality work. Holdbacks are common, and those, of course, are included in contracts. I believe, and I think we over here believe, that contracts should be upheld, and that's a good way for municipalities to ensure good work. There are many stories out there where contractors are not getting paid, and I think we have to take steps to make that happen. It's a sense of fairness.

I know that sometimes, in seeing some of the actions by the party opposite, we don't see a lot of fairness in the government. I'm somewhat surprised at some of the comments made by the minister about not being positive, because I think that we on this side are trying to make initiatives that we can get through. But, of course, we're very limited in what we can do with this government.

I think the people of Ontario are demanding an election, and we're hoping we can finally get support from the third party to make sure that happens, because we see a lot of things. Just like today, trying to change the page by throwing over our member from Nipissing over the release of information that's clearly in public hands and trying to point out that maybe there was something wrong with that. I think that's shameful. We've seen enough of this government where they're trying to change the plan.

I think we want to make sure that we have some positive things done in this Legislature. We want to see some positive actions toward jobs. Helping out small businesses, as the member from Windsor is talking about, is all a part of that.

I was quite surprised about her talking about the lack of positive ideas on this side, especially from a government that recently, in my riding, closed one important campus. My residents actually go to both of them, the one in Alfred and the one in Kemptville. To try to insinuate that they knew nothing about it—these campuses are closed. They're the only campuses in eastern Ontario, in an industry that the Minister of Agriculture, who also serves as Premier, talked just on Monday of last week about how important it was and needing new jobs. We certainly didn't see that. I'm getting letters now from people—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to restrict his comments to the motion that's in front of us, please.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Of course, we're talking about help for small business, and this is just part of it. Education, I believe, is very important for small business; in this case, agriculture. So we'd like to see that. We'd like some help on the issue. So far, all we've gotten is—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): To the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, this is my second warning to confine your remarks to the motion that's in front of us.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm responding to the speaker on the other side, where they're talking about nothing being positive on this side. I think that's very fair to be talking about some of the issues. It was something brought up by them, and I think that lack of initiative towards maintaining education is very important to our small business and, in this case, agriculture—a priority of this Premier—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry: This is my final warning to ask you to confine your comments to the motion in front of us.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Speaker, I—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): My final warning will be that I'll have to move to the next speaker.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I was just saying that I'm passing my time off to my other speakers on this side. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to add my comments and thoughts to this debate by my colleague the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, Mr. Hatfield, Percy—a good friend of mine. I want to congratulate him, first and foremost, for having the courage to stand up for his community and bring about—you know, if all politics is local, we all know that it's important for us to do that job, that local job; I see it reflected in many bills that come forward in this House. I'm really proud to see how quickly and effectively the new member from Windsor—Tecumseh has identified a problem, worked with stakeholders and brought a solution forward—a practical solution—to this House for us to consider to actually implement.

We can debate the nature of what a motion is versus a bill, but ultimately, at the end of the day, people will see

the vote in this House. They will understand that we together, as a legislative body, endorse the principles built into the motion. That's what it is about. It's an effective means for us to get that principle forward. I just can't thank him enough for doing this, and making it a priority to support small businesses in our communities, because each one of us, in our ridings and our communities, have faced this problem with small businesses—especially in the construction sector. So I want to thank him.

This issue has been borne about by the government's initiative and embracing of public-private partnerships, and it's specifically borne out of the Herb Gray Parkway and the fact that that project has been given to a foreign multinational without any skin in the game—no skin in the game. They've come in. They're able to finance the project. They apply a massive amount of pressure on subcontractors in our region—in fact, sometimes making them go through 900-page contracts to even bid on the projects, let alone win the tender. So you've got that.

Then, secondly, when contractors do get the ability to perform some of the work, it most likely is a related employer, as in the case of Freyssinet, which is a French multinational that has ties to the actual conglomerate of Acciona, Dragados—the Spanish firms. This is an employer that has realized that the only way for them to be able to make a buck off of this P3 is that they have skirted regulatory issues in the construction and fabrication of the girders. Thankfully, myself, my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh—Mr. Hatfield—and the federal member from Windsor West sounded the alarm. And the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the member from Windsor West, has the gall to stand and say that we're chasing headlines. If it were not for New Democrats in southwestern Ontario, the government would have turned a blind eye to the defective girders and made a project unsafe for decades, for generations. How dare the minister tell us that we're chasing headlines. We're actually shining a light on the ineffectiveness of the government when it comes to public infrastructure projects.

Back to the fact that companies are able to bid and not have any skin in the game, let alone provide really a defective product at the end of the day—they are not paying their bills. The member from Windsor—Tecumseh listed off a whole host of suppliers that, in good faith, provided quality projects to this foreign multinational and supplied them on time at a reasonable price, all along thinking that certainly there should be no problem here. It's an easy transaction of commerce. But yet, Freyssinet decided that, maybe in retribution for the government finally acting and kicking off that project, thanks to the work that we've done, they're not going to pay their bills, so they're walking away.

1430

Charlie Hotham, from Hotham Building Materials, has \$100,000 in outstanding debt. Brad Coxon of Coxon's Towing Service is owed money. Greg Drouillard from Target Building Materials—these are people we've all

met with. They can't believe it. They're long-standing small businesses in our community. They have wonderful reputations. They're good business people in good standing in our communities. Yet this company, through the endorsement of the government, is allowed to not only work on these projects, but bid on other projects.

This is what this bill does today—

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's not a bill.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Sorry, a motion; you're correct.

The motion presents a really practical solution and concept that I hope the member from Vaughan might consider as an amendment to his bill; I don't know. Or maybe he could use his influence to do this, because it seems very practical to us. If, through your own negligence or—we're saying that these businesses are not willing to pay their bill at all. They shouldn't be allowed to bid on other projects, government projects. If they are willfully walking away from their outstanding bills, then no way; you're not going to get to bid on the 403 or the 407 or any other projects. Pay your bills to local contractors first before you do it.

It goes back to that entire issue of how we are approaching procurement and construction of major infrastructure projects in the province. The member from Windsor West spoke about our reluctance to support the government's initiative on the Herb Gray Parkway. That's because we identified, way, way before, that you were heading into a P3 disaster, and that has actually happened. And you've done it all along, through hospital procurement, in our education system, building schools, whatever it is. This reliance on P3s is creating a real disaster through the bundling of projects. These are concerns that the government should know of. We knew of it back before the project was even fully worked out, in terms of whether it was going to be completely below grade or above grade or half and half. We knew that, overall, the P3 model was not going to be an effective model, and there were major red flags.

Again, I have to take issue with the fact that the member from Windsor West says that we were not supportive of the Herb Gray Parkway. We were not supportive of the way we knew they were going to finance it and abdicate their responsibility to make sure that we have the best infrastructure at the best cost and that our local contractors were benefiting from it. What they're concerned about is that they've got public dollars being used to finance or to pay for these infrastructure projects that are actually ending up bankrupting smaller businesses, small contractors, in our region. Could you imagine that, that public dollars are actually putting small businesses in our communities out of business?

The government has an opportunity here today to remedy the problem by adopting and supporting my friend's motion by acknowledging that—you know what?—it's quite reasonable to expect that anybody who engages in public infrastructure construction or procurement should abide by some normal standards of commerce. Pay your bills. We want you to be on the up-and-up. We want you to leave a legacy of good faith in

the communities in which you build, regardless of if you're home-based in Ontario or a foreign company. We do things a certain way here, and what the Liberals have done is say, "We don't care how you get it done. We don't care who gets left in the wake. We don't care how many businesses have to chase you through the liens act or have to initiate legal action on you and spend probably multiples of what they're owed." Some companies are saying: "You know what? It's not worth as much as it's going to cost me to go and chase a massive foreign multinational for \$15,000."

Unfortunately, Charlie Hotham has had to initiate legal action against the government. Is that what it takes? The member from Windsor West says we're chasing headlines. The red flags have been waving in the face of the Ministry of Infrastructure and the member from Windsor-Tecumseh for quite some time. For months and months they've tried to resolve this issue. Charlie Hotham has written to the minister without any resolve, any resolution. We're at wits' end. I want to, again, applaud the member from Windsor-Tecumseh for having the courage to stand up. It would almost be expected that they would say we were grandstanding on this issue. Not at all, Speaker. This is common sense. It's a practical, easy solution for the government to adopt into their overall infrastructure plan.

We spoke yesterday about a bill. The Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act was debated in the House yesterday, and the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation spoke about the benefits of domestic procurement. He spoke about the fact that good, solid projects support communities. Well, when they're done in the way that obviously pits smaller contractors against foreign multinationals and leaves them hanging, that's not a way that I think Ontarians want to see us procure any infrastructure in the future.

We need to absolutely understand that we have a certain code here in the province, we have a certain standard that should be expected, and through supporting this motion today, you will send that message to any bidder, any construction company, any firm that's willing and ready to build in this province, that they have to do it in an up-and-up way and in good faith.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a great—jeez, I sound like a broken record; I say this virtually every time. It is a great honour, a great privilege, to have the chance to stand and speak today regarding this particular motion, motion number 63, brought forward by the member from Windsor-Tecumseh.

It is, as I think would be known by most in this House, an issue that is near and dear to my heart. As has been mentioned by I think virtually every speaker so far, this is a motion that is, at a philosophical level, very consistent with the private member's bill that I brought forward in May 2013, Bill 69, otherwise known as the Prompt Payment Act, which itself is based on the fundamental principle that work in the construction sector that is

completed, that is certified as complete, should be paid on time.

As many will know in this House, that is a bill that was introduced in May 2013, passed second reading in May 2013, and earlier this week, just yesterday in fact, arrived for its first round of public hearings at committee. So to the member from Windsor-Tecumseh, I want to acknowledge that he has brought forward this particular motion today, and I also want to acknowledge and thank him for participating at committee yesterday, along with myself, several members of our caucus and other members from both opposition caucuses, for what I thought was a very robust discussion from a number of participants representing the entire spectrum of Ontario's construction industry, with more to come next Wednesday—people who are very passionate about the work that takes place in the construction realm, in the infrastructure realm, people who want to make sure that none of us who has an interest in making sure that Ontario's construction industry continues to flourish does anything to take away from that fundamental principle that work that is certified as complete is paid on time or paid within a reasonable period of time.

There are a couple of things that I've heard, primarily from the member from Essex, that I'd like to spend a little bit of time talking about if I have time near the end of my contribution this afternoon, but I think it is important to note that what we are discussing here today is something that is largely symbolic because it is a motion before this House; it doesn't bind anyone.

I think it's also important to note that when the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the member from Windsor West, stood in her place earlier in this debate and spoke about this particular motion, she made some very, very important points. Unusually for me, I don't want to get into too much of a partisan back and forth on this issue, but I think it is important to note that over the last 10 years—not just on this particular project for the Windsor area and not just for the Windsor area; this is a project that's important for the entire economy of the province of Ontario—right across this province, since 2003, for more than a generation, governments of every stripe here in Ontario—Liberal, Conservative and NDP—had left infrastructure renewal off to the side. It's a fairly complex issue, and it's an expensive issue, and sometimes it's easy to punt those expensive, difficult decisions further down the road to let someone else take on and handle.

But back in 2003, our government made the decision that we could no longer let Ontario's significant and increasing infrastructure deficit continue. It's why we embarked, 10 years ago and in every successive year, on a very aggressive strategy, a very aggressive plan, to make sure that we rebuilt Ontario's infrastructure.

1440

It's not a partisan issue. I'm not blaming the other two opposition parties for the time when they were in government. They deserve some of the blame, but so do we, because, historically, there were times when we served in

power as well and we didn't necessarily make the right decisions.

Ten years ago, we decided to start investing billions of dollars, not only to benefit communities like Windsor but to benefit my community, Vaughan; York region; the north; the east; rural Ontario; urban Ontario; suburban Ontario. We've seen dozens of hospitals built. We've seen university additions and revitalizations, schools, community centres, roads, bridges, sewers, highways and public transit infrastructure built right across this province, using—not in every single case but in many cases—world-leading innovative procurement techniques. It's working, Speaker.

So when I hear members like the member from Essex stand and talk about how public-private partnerships around procurement for infrastructure are not working particularly well, I say that doesn't stand up to scrutiny. Infrastructure Ontario is a global leader when it comes to being innovative around how we procure large-scale infrastructure projects. They have an exemplary and stellar record of delivering dozens of massive infrastructure projects, on budget and on time, that don't just benefit the Ontario economy because of the economic output but provide jobs—thousands and thousands and thousands of jobs.

I don't have much time left on the clock, and this is a debate and a discussion that deserves far more attention than the last 60 seconds or so, as it relates to procurement.

I do want to say, circling back to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, I hope you'll have the chance to join us at committee next Wednesday for the second round of public hearings on my private member's bill. I do thank him, to an extent, for bringing forward this philosophically similar motion today. I will personally be supporting this motion.

But I do want to stress to the people from Windsor and southwestern Ontario, who I'm sure are watching intently from home today, that the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the member from Windsor West, is an extraordinary champion for her community. She, on a daily basis, stands in her place in this chamber, in our caucus room and at the cabinet table, and makes sure that she puts the residents and the businesses of Windsor and her community first and foremost. She's doing a phenomenal job and she deserves a great deal of credit, not only for delivering crucial investments to her community but for doing her community proud in this place.

With that, I'll close off my remarks and say thank you very much for the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, it's my pleasure to rise today and to speak to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh's motion. I'm not going to read his motion in detail, because it's quite extensive, but for the most part, this is a pretty straightforward motion for those of us who have some background in this sort of thing.

For those at home who may not have expertise in construction or procurement, let's just think of this as the

“fool me once” motion. I'm not going to do my George W. Bush impersonation of “fool me once,” but if you fool me once, shame on you. If you fool me twice, shame on me. If a construction business performing work for the provincial government fails to in turn pay its subcontractors, rest assured they won't be able to fool us again.

This motion would in fact punish companies that either wilfully or negligently fail to pay their subcontractors or suppliers when it comes to government work. They will be barred from future public contracts, which then actually rewards the many companies in Ontario that do play by the rules.

Good, ethical companies pay their bills on time, and these are the companies that we should be entrusting public dollars and vitally important projects to. This motion will have no impact on the companies that do the right thing. But by getting unethical or, at the very least, unreliable companies out of the way, we open the door for inclusion of better business.

We need to stand up for Ontario's small and medium-sized businesses, that stand to lose the most when questionable companies fail to pay a contractor or supplier. Many of these companies just simply cannot afford to wait for months and months to receive payment. It's hard enough to stay in business in Ontario under this Liberal government when energy costs are skyrocketing and tax hikes are looming overhead.

Mr. Speaker, you can understand why the member from Windsor–Tecumseh would bring forward such a motion, given some of the recent events that have unfolded in his riding regarding the Herb Gray Parkway. Here's a quote from the Windsor Star, dated November 13, 2013: “The European girder manufacturer which was bounced from the Herb Gray Parkway project owes money to more than a dozen Windsor-area companies and some of the debts top six figures.” This obviously is very concerning to those Windsor-area companies, their employees and their families.

I've seen first-hand in my riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex the concern that is raised when any point of the supply chain is jeopardized. We can talk a little bit about the Heinz closure back in November. The good news is, about a third of those lost jobs will in fact be recouped come this summer.

But again, Speaker, despite all of this, this European manufacturer that reportedly owes more than a dozen Windsor-area companies is still able to bid on additional government contracts. You have to wonder why the government continues to do business with these sorts of companies.

This motion, if passed, would allow future governments to protect the public purse and Ontario companies by ensuring that we only deal with responsible businesses that honour their obligations to those they enter into contracts with. Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

Speaker, I support this motion, and I look forward to ongoing debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I wish I had more time to respond to the member from Vaughan. He's absolutely right: The Ontario government has carried out more infrastructure public-private partnerships than any other government in Canada. That is true. They're more aggressive in those deals than the Conservative Party at the federal level. They go hand in hand, they are locked hand in hand, in giving away large contracts to the conglomerates involved in these public-private partnerships. The value for money doesn't go to the public; it goes to the conglomerates. The profits go into their pockets, not ours. That's what I wish I had more time to respond to, and I don't.

Unfortunately, you can never see the value-for-money contracts because of confidentiality agreements and because the details of those agreements are never really broken down. So we will never know. But the fact of the matter is, as it relates to this resolution, if a company does the work, if a subcontractor does the work, for a government, and they are not paying, they should not have any more work. That's the simple matter of this resolution, and all the Liberal members need to do is say, "We agree."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm pleased to rise today and join the debate around the motion introduced by the member from Windsor-Tecumseh. It's safe to assume that today's motion is rooted in the member's riding and a string of incidents around the construction of the Herb Gray Parkway.

The firm selected to supply the bulk of the girders for the parkway's construction was, of course, a Spanish company, working in partnership with a French company. They established an operation in Windsor, hired workers and delivered hundreds of girders, which were installed, later found to be defective, and then ordered removed. Production and installation of the girders was carried out for months before the plant in question was certified by the Canadian Standards Association.

Since then, both companies have left the city, raising some serious questions about the way contracts are handed out and about the standards being brought to bear on these projects, Speaker.

Aside from the issue of quality standards, both of the offending firms on the Windsor parkway project have also reportedly left unpaid bills in their wake. The motion before us asks that if a construction business performs work for the government, a government agency or broader public sector entity and fails to pay a subcontractor or supplier in respect of that work, they would be barred from consideration on future public sector bids until such time as they have made payment, Speaker.

As things stand, the firms responsible for the shoddy girders in Windsor and who apparently left subcontractors in the lurch may still be free to bid on addi-

tional public projects. It's not clear that the Windsor debacle, or their conduct in its wake, would disqualify them from consideration.

1450

The intention of this motion before us today is, on the face of it, sound. It represents what would be widely seen as a positive step. I think that people across Ontario would agree that the province's broader public sector should conduct business with reputable companies that pay their bills and conduct themselves in an above-the-board manner.

The government is tasked with building and maintaining the province's infrastructure on an ongoing basis. These substantial opportunities are capable of creating not just public assets but also enormous economic opportunity. Hand in hand with that is a responsibility to the people of Ontario.

We support the core principle here, which is that subcontractors or suppliers should be paid for their work in a timely manner, but this motion strikes me as more symbolic than substantial. Ontario businesses face far larger challenges than the problem this motion tackles, and Ontario Progressive Conservatives are the only ones with a comprehensive job plan to address current economic concerns.

The people of this province deserve a government with a plan to grow the economy and to turn Ontario around. The people of this province deserve a government that takes the public trust seriously and that understands that leadership is about making tough but necessary decisions.

There is no easy path back to greatness, but the future belongs to the bold. Ontario Progressive Conservatives have a plan to create a million new jobs. We know what needs to be done, and we're prepared to lead.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Windsor-Tecumseh: You have two minutes.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. If I can start by addressing the concerns raised by the member from Windsor West—playing politics, and calling it symbolic and a pressure tactic—yes, absolutely, it is symbolic.

The reason we got involved—let's not rewrite history: The suppliers came to us because the member from Windsor West would not return their calls, would not hold a meeting with them and would not listen to them. Their businesses were in trouble, jobs were on the line, and the member for Windsor West was silent. She was invisible, so yes, they came to us. Yes, we listened, and we're putting forward today a symbolic resolution, trying to keep the partisanship out of it, but looking for reconciliation to get some bills paid.

Yes, I admitted it to the minister when I gave him the notice of it a couple of weeks ago: We're just trying to help you out, because the minister has told me that, under current legislation, he doesn't really have the power to force this company to pay its bills. So we said that maybe this will help.

I know that the member from Vaughan, who's the author of Bill 69, the Prompt Payment Act—this might

have helped a year or two ago. It's not doing anything right now. So we moved this resolution and gave it to the minister hoping that, if Management Board of Cabinet can make a few minor changes, Freysinett Canada will not be allowed to bid on other government work until they pay their bills that have been outstanding for almost a year. That's all this is about. It's a pressure tactic to make the guy pay his bills.

I want to thank all the members who spoke on it—especially my good friend the member from Essex, for his very passionate defence of this motion. It's not rocket science; it's a pretty simple resolution, and it's only designed to help out the little guy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on the motion at the end of private members' business.

LEARNING THROUGH WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'APPRENTISSAGE PAR L'EXPÉRIENCE EN MILIEU DE TRAVAIL

Ms. Sattler moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act to establish the Advisory Council on Work-Integrated Learning / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités pour créer le Conseil consultatif de l'apprentissage intégré au travail.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm honoured to stand today, as MPP for London West, to speak in support of my first private member's bill, the Learning Through Workplace Experience Act. The opportunity to shape public policy is one of the most important roles that MPPs play as we bring forward legislation that responds to the needs of our communities and helps to make things better for the people we represent, not only in our own ridings but across the province.

The overall purpose of my bill is to expand work-integrated learning opportunities for post-secondary students. Work-integrated learning, or WIL as it is known, includes such programs as co-ops, field placements, internships, service learning and more—programs that are integrated into a student's course of study as either mandatory or voluntary components. My bill does this by bringing together students, post-secondary institutions and employers in a provincial Advisory Council on Work-Integrated Learning, mandated to make recommendations to the minister on how to engage more employers in providing work-integrated learning and paid opportunities in particular; how to support post-secondary institutions in delivering quality WIL experiences for students; and how to ensure that all students

who are interested in participating in WIL are able to participate across different faculties and fields of study.

This is an initiative that is critical to my community of London. London is home to two of Ontario's largest and finest post-secondary institutions: Fanshawe College and Western University. With over 200 programs, Fanshawe has an international reputation for the high quality of its hands-on learning opportunities. Known for offering Canada's best student experience, and as a global knowledge leader—Western's new strategic plan, Achieving Excellence on the World Stage, commits Western to investing the incremental resources required to increase the number of work-integrated-learning experiences and international learning opportunities, so that any academically eligible student wishing to participate in such learning opportunities will be able to do so.

My community is also situated in a region that has been hardest hit by the collapse of the manufacturing sector, and we continue to struggle with persistently high unemployment rates. This is especially the case for young people. Youth unemployment in Middlesex-London rose from 11% in 2007 to almost 21% in 2011, a level higher than any other large Ontario CMA. So my community has a huge stake in ensuring that the students graduating from our local institutions are able to transition seamlessly into the workforce, to get jobs that reflect the skills they gained during post-secondary study and to help our economy grow and prosper.

We know from the research that work experience is a crucial factor, perhaps the crucial factor, in ensuring positive labour market outcomes for post-secondary students. It is also critical to assist internationally educated professionals in integrating into the labour market, who frequently face barriers because of lack of Canadian experience. But tight labour markets are leaving more and more students without opportunities to find jobs. In fact, this has led to the OECD identifying a new cohort of workers called PINEs, or poorly integrated new entrants. These are young people with post-secondary credentials who frequently go back and forth between temporary, precarious jobs, unemployment, and withdrawal from the labour market altogether, representing a critical loss of talent and an enormous missed opportunity to leverage the skills of these young people to contribute to economic growth and prosperity. More troubling, precarious work creates discouragement, fear and a loss of career hope, which can lead to disengagement from the labour market, from the political process and from the community.

I'm proud to have the support of a range of both local and provincial organizations for my bill, and I'd like to take a few minutes to share with you why these organizations are supporting my effort.

Tyler Sutton is the president of Emerging Leaders, a civic organization focused on attracting, connecting and retaining London's 20-to-44-year-old youth demographic. He says, "Emerging Leaders of London is firmly in support of programs and initiatives that provide young people with the skills, opportunities and resources needed to excel in Ontario's rapidly changing economy. This"

PMB “will help to build bridges between school and work in Ontario. With abundant and well-designed practicums, clinical placements,” co-ops “and internships incorporated into Ontario’s education system, both students and employers will benefit. With more opportunities for London’s post-secondary students to work directly with our community’s thriving businesses and organizations, connecting and retaining London’s best and brightest will be made that much easier.”

1500

Deb Mountenay of the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board says, “Work-integrated-learning programs facilitate the transition for students from their post-secondary education into employment. This benefits students, employers and our local communities.... Through the establishment of an advisory council on work-integrated learning, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities would be taking a leadership role in encouraging broader participation in work-integrated-learning programs by employers and students.”

My bill is also supported by Western University, the Western University student council, the Fanshawe Student Union and the president of the London and District Labour Council. Provincially, my bill is supported by the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, or OUSA; the Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario; and Education at Work Ontario, a provincial organization representing all Ontario college and university co-op programs.

The president of OUSA says, “OUSA believes that the work of the advisory council on work-integrated learning has the potential to increase student access to high-impact learning and working experiences. This can give students greater opportunity and choice as they transition out of university and begin their careers in Ontario. As such, our students strongly support this bill.”

Similarly, the chairperson of CFS-Ontario says, “Students welcome this initial step in expanding and increasing access to paid internships, work terms and co-op placement at Ontario colleges and universities. We look forward to continuing to work with MPPs on addressing the current crisis in youth un- and under-employment across the province.”

Finally, Education at Work Ontario offered these comments: “This legislation is an excellent and long-overdue initiative. We, as co-op professionals, recognize the substantial impact that WIL has on a graduate’s ability to find program-related work opportunities when they complete their program. An employer’s need for experienced, qualified help does not diminish despite the economic climate, and WIL is a cost-effective, successful method to provide the resources when needed.”

Support for my bill is strong because it responds directly to concerns identified by leading economic organizations and public policy think tanks. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce recently urged the government to launch a province-wide initiative to foster greater awareness of, and participation in, experiential learning at all levels in order to equip students with the practical

business-related skills required to make a seamless transition from the classroom to the workplace.

A 2013 report on youth unemployment in Ontario by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives recommended that Ontario make much greater use of innovative work-integrated learning programs and community service learning programs. Their report, *The Young and the Jobless*, points out: “Greater investment in programming along these lines can increase the responsiveness of both the labour market and the education system to economic needs, while at the same time providing more meaningful educational experiences.”

The barriers to employer involvement in providing WIL are particularly significant for small and medium-sized enterprises, or SME. The Mowat Centre for policy innovation noted that many SMEs find it difficult to initiate collaborations with post-secondary institutions and to participate in work-integrated-learning programs like co-ops.

A 2008 study of experiential learning by the Canadian Council on Learning observed that institutional processes may be difficult for employers to navigate and that centralized information and examples of appropriate work placements would be helpful to employers.

How does my bill address these issues? First, it amends the MTCU act to add the term “work-integrated learning” to legislation in Ontario for the first time as an overarching term to describe programs that combine work with a course of study. This responds to concerns expressed all too often by post-secondary students who engage in work activities as part of their college or university study, where they’re asked to perform menial, unpaid routine tasks that do not advance their skills or contribute to their learning. The legislation also offers a definition of work-integrated learning that defines it as separate and distinct from other types of labour market activity.

Second, the bill creates an advisory council on work-integrated learning and identifies the membership of the council as representing a broad range of stakeholder organizations across the post-secondary, labour market and economic development sectors.

What’s most important to me as a former policy researcher is that the bill is informed directly by data gathered over a four-year multi-phase study led by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, in which I was a principal investigator. That study generated three key findings: There is growing student demand for WIL, there is limited employer involvement in providing WIL, and there is strong commitment across the post-secondary sector to ensuring quality WIL experiences for students.

Before I conclude, I want to recognize the efforts of Dakin McDonald, from NDP caucus research, for his exemplary assistance with my legislation.

This bill highlights the value of programs like field placements, co-ops, practicums and internships in helping students gain valuable skills and preparing them for good jobs while helping employers develop the talent

they need in their sector. When we support post-secondary students in transitioning more effectively from education to the labour market, the province as a whole benefits from lower youth unemployment, increased productivity and a higher number of graduates equipped with the skills required to address labour market needs.

I urge your support for this bill and welcome hearing your comments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'm glad for the opportunity to rise and to speak to Bill 172, the Learning Through Workplace Experience Act, 2014, introduced by the member for London West. I want to congratulate the member on the introduction of her first private member's bill, and this is definitely a good one.

I agree with the member that learning through experience is vital to this government's commitment to investing in Ontario's youth. This government has always been open to the expansion and improvement of programs that offer youth experiential learning opportunities. We are recognized leaders in North America for this with renowned institutions like Sheridan College, with their digital animation program; the University of Waterloo; and the University of Toronto, with many of its programs, including at the Scarborough campus. We recognize that providing our youth with these dynamic opportunities will foster a more dynamic business climate here in Ontario for years to come.

In my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood, there is a significant youth population. Centennial College, the Progress Campus, is located within my riding, and the University of Toronto Scarborough campus sits just on its border. Our youth are very concerned about being equipped for the job market upon graduation. I had the opportunity to speak to many of these youth at my youth career fair in Scarborough—Guildwood at the beginning of this month, and another opportunity to speak to the parents and youth advocates in my riding at my recent pre-budget consultation. Investment in youth opportunities is a huge priority in my riding, a riding that is full of teens, young adults and young families, who are also concerned for the future of their children. Investing in the youth of this province is a way to guarantee a better future for Ontario. Ontario's youth are our future, and it is up to us to ensure that they are well equipped and prepared to take up our jobs when we leave the workforce.

Youth and families are concerned about what awaits recent graduates, whether they have learnt enough in their post-secondary experience to transition successfully into the labour market and if it will make it easier for them to find gainful employment in a field that they are passionate about. However, another concern for these families is the role of government in this case. While this bill, in theory, is reasonable and places a focus on a very key area within the youth employment sector, we as legislators need to identify if there are already programs or a system in place that tries to achieve the same thing and if the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and

Universities is the best, most direct route for achieving these goals.

This government supports the development of the skills and knowledge base of students through experiential learning, and especially co-op education. This government continues to make investments in the post-secondary education system. We are well aware of the benefits of the 30% off tuition grant, the Ontario Co-operative Education Tax Credit and the Co-op Diploma Apprenticeship Program.

1510

This government is committed to investing in Ontario's youth. Our youth employment fund, in fact, is one of the ways that we're doing so. Just last night, I had the opportunity to launch the LiveGood Project. It's a program by Goodwill that is focusing on matching youth with employers. In fact, 65 businesses in the creative sector have employed 65 young people to give them that hands-on experience.

That is why I will be supporting this bill, but I would like to see it go to committee, where it can be further analyzed in order to address any inefficiencies or redundancies that may be present in this bill, should it pass.

Speaker, 21st-century learning requires students to develop and expand on their ideas. While at CivicAction, I had the opportunity to participate in much experiential learning. The ideas that were presented by these young people were transformative. We welcome and need their ideas and their creativity.

In fact, these ideas have the power to change our communities. One of the programs that I participated in was at Centennial College. It was called the Big Race, and it brought together the idea of changing how we invest in infrastructure for transit in our city. Through this cross-divisional program, it created an understanding and a learning that not only do we need to invest in these, but we must invest in our infrastructure in order to provide the business community, young people and students with an opportunity to get around more efficiently.

So, absolutely, I support Bill 172, but I want to ensure that we are taking a close examination so that we're not repeating things that are already in place.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This bill falls into the category of "Who wouldn't want to help our students learn from experience and make for a richer educational experience for them?"

However, this bill has a lot of questions associated with it. Creating a new bureaucracy is always dangerous. What cost would that be? Who's going to oversee the council that's proposed, or is it just going to wander down the road without oversight? Who will administer it, and at what additional cost would that be? Many of the universities and colleges of today already have outreach programs that involve co-op learning and those kinds of things. What kinds of processes are going to be put in place to avoid duplication in those areas?

Much of this bill seems to be rather long on bureaucracy; it seems to be rather short on details. It doesn't

enunciate very clearly how those services are going to be provided, it doesn't talk about how it's going to control costs, and it certainly doesn't talk about how it's going to avoid duplication. However, those things could all probably be addressed in committee.

In the spirit of helping students towards a richer educational process, I would probably support the bill in second reading, but without massive changes in committee, I would reserve the right not to support this bill in third reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 172, the Learning Through Workplace Experience Act. However, before I do that, I want to take a moment to congratulate my colleague from London West. She has done her homework, as always; she has done the hard work. The depth of knowledge that she brings to this bill is certainly bar none. She is, by her own admission, a researcher, and a very well-educated researcher at that. I know from her experience that she brings to this Legislature that this bill is probably going to be one of the best bills you'll see going to committee, and you may find hardly any efficiencies. I just want to put that forward. I have a lot of confidence in this bill and a lot of confidence in the member of London West that she took the time and the due diligence to make this bill the best it can be.

Introducing your first private member's bill is an important milestone in the career of every member, as we know, and this particular bill demonstrates my colleague's commitment and passion for helping Ontario's post-secondary students gain the valuable skills they need to prepare them for the job market. This bill represents the kind of thoughtful and meaningful approach that New Democrats are committed to delivering. Moreover, it will bring together students, post-secondary institutions and employers to expand work-integrated-learning opportunities for students.

For me, one of the most important issues in this bill addresses the current state of the vulnerability of our students and our youth. Our youth are facing unprecedented levels of unemployment; I believe that that number is hovering at approximately 16% right now. That, along with the ever-increasing trend toward unpaid internships that do not contribute to their learning and skills development, are significant concerns and take a very serious toll on the professional, financial and emotional stability of Ontario's youth.

We need to ask ourselves some important questions about the kind of future we are providing today's youth. Currently, Ontario's students are paying the highest tuition fees in this country. They are seeing the least per capita investment in this country, while forcing them to work for free under all-encompassing terms like "co-op," "placement," "internship" and "service learning."

Ontario's students need opportunities to earn while they learn, and this bill offers our students the opportunity to do just that. It further codifies how true work-

integrated-learning opportunities should work, by bringing together all partners in the sector and giving them an equal seat at the table.

For me, the creation of a provincial advisory council on work-integrated learning is the most important facet to establishing real change and new ways of thinking about integrated learning opportunities. Further, by defining work-integrated learning, as she has done, it provides clarity to what are now very convoluted—and difficult for most people to understand—terms of reference. It also calls for important, needed oversight by ensuring the supervisory component truly necessary for student success. Most importantly, I'm very happy that it requires all work to be defined and agreed to in writing by the institution, the employer and the participant before the work placement begins.

I'm also very impressed with how the member made connections between work-integrated learning as a partial fulfillment of the requirements of a post-secondary course of study and as an option within a post-secondary course of study. By focusing on the WILs, on the predetermined and agreed learning outcomes, it allows students, in collaboration with the university or college, to genuinely and critically reflect on their work experience.

The proposed council will have their work cut out for them, but I understand that that is an opportunity. By allowing the scope of the council to include three key areas, the first opportunity includes increasing employer awareness of the benefits of WILs by providing resources to assist employers develop WIL suitability for their business, and by highlighting the availability of financial and other supports for participating employers.

The next opportunity for council, as I understand it, is the identification of resources and supports to the post-secondary institutions. This will ensure the success of the expansion of WIL opportunities across faculties and programs. It will also help improve the deliveries of programs to help maximize educational benefits for students.

The council will also be tasked with ensuring that the students who are interested in participating in WIL are able to do so. By tasking the council to make recommendations to the development website, this bill will see a web portal that becomes a one-stop access point for students and employers and raises awareness about the shared benefits for everyone.

I truly believe that this bill represents a win-win scenario for students, employers, colleges and universities. What I am most pleased about are the tangible returns we will see as a province.

There's also another component I'd like to bring up: about new Canadians who enter post-secondary education.

1520

Many, many years ago, there were vast opportunities for new immigrants to enter the workforce. I believe that this bill, the WIL bill, will also give new immigrants and new Canadians the opportunity, in order to enter the workforce, to gain experience and also be paid.

Right now, many new Canadians are entering precarious work through temporary agencies, and they aren't getting benefits or any kind of stability. This will also help new Canadians to integrate into the workforce.

I just want to say congratulations again to the member from London West. I do look forward to this bill passing and having it go to committee, to see if there is possibly any way of improving this bill. I'd love to know what that would be.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to speak and provide my comments with regard to the member from London West on Bill 172. Let me begin my remarks with the timeliness of this bill. This week is recognized as national co-op education week, so I want to recognize the timeliness of this bill.

But I also want to share with you, with respect to this bill, that in this House we all know the importance of experiential learning for our young learners. We know that there is evidence to prove that experiential learning is good for every student. Also, this government has recognized that experiential learning is a priority. We have always been open with respect to expanding and improving these programs across Ontario. Right now, we're currently supporting 40,000 co-op students in our post-secondary institutions.

I'm not sure the members across as well as in the House know this, but Waterloo University is recognized as having the largest co-op education program in the world. So the home of the largest co-op education program in the entire world is here in the province of Ontario. Again, I want to applaud the university and those across the province, as well as the colleges.

Co-op education is an integral part of university and college education across this province, with hosts of post-secondary co-op programs offered in not just one university but, across the province, in colleges and universities.

The other piece is, our government has supported post-secondary co-op education through the Ontario Co-operative Education Tax Credit, which provides up to \$3,000 to help employers that hire co-op students. Ontario has thousands of employers involved in hiring co-op students in multiple sectors, like manufacturing and finance. Through our Co-op Diploma Apprenticeship Program, students can get on-the-job apprenticeship training while earning a college degree.

Recently, the minister announced that we will be extending the 30% off tuition grant to students in their final year of a five-year co-op program. Eligible students can save up to \$1,730 in tuition fees each year.

The other piece I want to share with the members of this House is the fact that the proposed bill does not provide clarity, so I want to share a piece here. I want to make sure that the members hear it.

I'm not sure of the clarity of the bill, with regard to the debate, that the new advisory council is the best conduit for this type of change. In terms of the mandate, we don't know the lifespan of this advisory committee. The cost of this advisory committee is a concern.

The other piece is that we already have Colleges Ontario and the Council of Ontario Universities. Those bodies already exist. Can they be part of this advisory council? I know the mandate in terms of membership, but are we going to create another layer of a body to review post-secondary co-op education?

The other piece here is that a significant concern I have—the member did not address it in her proposed legislation—is the safety component. In terms of the membership, there's no comment made about safety.

I know that the Minister of Labour recently proposed his legislation, Bill 146, that talks about amending the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and it talks about post-secondary students who are performing or supplying services with no monetary compensation. It talks about the whole amendment on the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The other concern that I have is that although the intent of the bill is to ensure co-op education is province-wide, giving experiential learning and hopefully improving youth unemployment, the other piece that we need to also ask is with respect to this type of public appointment. The membership of this advisory council is publicly appointed and there's no mention of consulting with legal services or the Public Appointments Secretariat to make sure the process is vetted and that the membership of this council is open and transparent.

So those are my concerns.

The other piece here is that we also need to recognize the fact that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is right now working on work-integrated learning as a part of ongoing post-secondary education transformation. So how does this particular bill work with that particular transformation conversation currently with the ministry?

So all in all, I certainly hear the passion, the interest from the member from London West, and I certainly know there is lots of merit in experiential learning.

In my last 38 seconds, Mr. Speaker, I want to share some of the comments from my constituent. I'm going to name her, because she gave me permission. Darlene said to me, "My practicum experiences in teachers' college have definitely enhanced my skills as both a student and teacher. I'm the kind of learner who requires hands-on application in conjunction with theoretical learning." Her boyfriend, Praveen, who is also a constituent of mine, spent two co-op terms with Facebook and is currently working at Facebook in Singapore.

So we know that many life stories of experiential learning lead to employment. I want to applaud the member opposite for bringing this particular bill to the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: First of all, I'd like to congratulate the member from London West on her first private member's bill. It's an important moment, and you've done some very good work on it.

I want to comment on it in the sense that we have to take a look at its overall effectiveness, and so that's where I'm going to focus.

Increasing the opportunity for students to engage in what are being called work-integrated-learning opportunities is certainly a good idea. In plain language, these are co-op programs and a variety of other work-study programs that are available at colleges and universities across the province.

The Learning Through Workplace Experience Act addresses an important issue. We are in a situation in Ontario where many graduates of post-secondary institutions, both colleges and universities, are finding it difficult to enter the workforce.

I would be remiss if I didn't recognize the fact that, as of last week—recognizing I come from a primarily agricultural riding of Huron—Bruce—students in eastern Ontario are going to find it difficult to be able to go to school to study an area that they are absolutely committed to, which is the agri-food sector. It's a shame that the agriculture minister has stood by to let this college be closed. I know how that community feels, because in 1993-94, the NDP closed the Centralia agricultural college. It's an absolute travesty, when we have a government that's encouraging workforces and the agri-food industry sector to step up to provide more jobs.

So we certainly need to be able to connect the dots between where the jobs are and what type of experience students need to get those jobs.

I'm afraid, when I look at it in more detail, that the advisory council on the work-integrated-learning aspect would be yet another layer of bureaucracy, and that would do more to get in the way of progress than it would to increase work-integrated-learning opportunities in Ontario. Having a centralized website with program offerings and general information about co-op programs and other work-study programs available in Ontario is a good idea, but having a panel of 18 people to put on another advisory council? I'd have to question that in terms of overall effectiveness and best use of our time.

I'm going to hold my comments on that, but I need to let you know that I reached out to a couple of teachers on this issue, and here's one comment in particular that came back: "I wonder why it's needed and if it's a waste of time/money—lots of talking but what will the council actually do? And the council will get paid? With taxpayers' dollars?"

1530

"I don't know really what the amendments are changing.... In of itself, is there a need for changes or is it change for the sake of change?"

We have to be very, very careful here in what we're proposing, and we have to do a lot more work on this particular private member's initiative, because it's lacking a lot of details, and that has already been addressed.

When we're facing a shortage of jobs—300,000 jobs—we have to be our best. Ontario needs a job plan that will go into effect immediately. The Ontario PC

Party is the only party that has a plan, and we're ready to get it into action.

To close, I have to say I agree with the member from Halton. In committee, a lot of work must be done in order to ensure continued support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is such a pleasure for me to stand in this house today in support of the private member's bill from the member from London West. I'm incredibly proud of her because both of us served, I think, a collective 22 years, through the public education system, as school board trustees. And even back then, the hunger for experiential learning opportunities from our youngest students was prevalent. We were pushing the government for the last 10 years to move towards a 21st-century learning model, which incorporates creative and communication and connecting and critical thinking skills.

When we first approached the member from London West to seek the nomination and run in that riding, we promised the opportunity to positively affect public policy in a meaningful way, in a pragmatic way. It's amazing that she has brought forward a piece of legislation which will do exactly that. The timing is perfect. It's crafted in a way which is so well researched and layered, and the consultation has already happened. In fact, the Liberal government should just pick it up and run with it, but we're going to make sure that it goes through the regular course of this House.

I just want to share a quick story. This morning, our leader, Andrea Horwath, was meeting with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, with their business advisory council, and a question came from the floor as to how we are going to address the productivity gap in this province. Because there is. There are employers who have a demand for a certain skill set which our post-secondary and our public education systems—we haven't quite got it right yet. Our leader answered that this is the first step. This is the first step to moving forward through learning through workplace experiences. These are powerful learning opportunities. I'm the MPP for Kitchener—Waterloo. I have spoken to students over the last year and a half from both the University of Waterloo and from Wilfrid Laurier, which have amazing co-op programs. Obviously, it's already been stated, the University of Waterloo has sort of broke ground on this, but also Conestoga College. Those are the experiences that students are seeking. They want the curriculum that they are learning in the classroom to be grounded by experience in the real world, and it's a mutually beneficial experience.

Some of the criticism I've heard this afternoon has not been overly surprising. I mean, the Conservatives say, "What's it going to cost?" Well, there is a cost to doing nothing. There is a cost to standing still. There is a cost to maintaining the status quo. The Liberals say that they're sort of already doing this, but they haven't put the infrastructure in place to make it happen. What we've

learned through many years of research is that you can talk about collaboration, and certainly there's a lot of talk in this House on that issue, but you actually have to put the mechanisms, the administration, in place to ensure that collaboration happens in a very balanced way.

This private member's bill would give some credibility to a new learning agenda. Students want—in fact, there's a growing student demand for working-integrated learning. There's a limited employer involvement in providing working-integrated learning, and there's a strong commitment across the post-secondary sector to ensuring quality experiences like this happen in the province of Ontario. It is timely. It is needed. Let's support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll be brief in my small time. First of all, I want to commend the member from London West. She does have an eminent background in what she speaks, so I commend her for that.

In a practical way, I want to communicate some of the background I have on this issue. I certainly agree with the work-integrated learning. It comes under many, many different names.

I should say that I worked for a very large company, and part of my time there was coordinating the largest co-op program in industry in Canada. We had about 72 engineers from Waterloo in each session. There's an A and a B session. I was the coordinator; I used to go and recruit them at the university. It was very excellent. Systems engineering, electrical engineering, when we were going robotic in the auto sector, were very important.

We also worked with the other colleges and universities to try and develop work-related experiences. We were instrumental in—the University of Toronto now has a co-op program called PEY, Professional Experience Year, for engineers between their third and fourth year. The same now is at Queen's University. Queen's was very much a theoretical engineering school, but I think it's important to say that institutions—and that's the message you're sending—need to adapt.

In fact, look at the education system itself. It's wrong to think that all children move around in little groups of 20. It's simply wrong. It works for the system but not for the students. I think if you can draw that out—learning the right skills at the right time becomes important and learning them in some kind of planned, organized way, what skills are appropriate at a certain developmental age. It's called play-based learning now in schooling.

I would say that this bill is provocative. I think the work world is changing totally. If you look at Rick Miner's book *People Without Jobs, Jobs Without People*, it's telling you a lot in that book. It's telling you that working for a company for 30 years is all finished. That will never happen. It will, perhaps, in the public sector. But people will become redundant in 10 years unless they're trained continuously. So work-integrated learning is already part of the life of work itself.

I would only say this: My children live in different parts of the world. I say that, but one of them practises law in Russia, China and Brazil. It's all online. They don't really have a place to go. If they have personnel meetings, they're usually in London, England. This is a true story of the life of the future.

So I ask the Minister of Labour today: What are the jobs of the future? It's got to be integrated manufacturing and other kinds of integration of systems along with human skills. So skills and skill sets are the most important thing in the world of work.

Not everybody is going to be an engineer. Some may be musicians, writers, artists, whatever else, but there's an appropriate time to learn. To think that, today, in our system, all the children move around in little groups of 20, is simply wrong. I'm not criticizing the system, the teachers. My wife is one, and my daughter is one—all the rest of it. I'm not blaming them. I'm saying the system—that's us; we create these systems—needs to change.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on your bill, and I'm sure it will pass.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm pleased to rise this spring afternoon—it is spring today at 11:57—and join the debate on Bill 172, the Learning Through Workplace Experience Act. As the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party's critic for economic development, trade and employment, I am actually aware of the challenges that our economy faces. The day-to-day reality can challenge even the most optimistic among us. These are not Ontario's brightest days, as we know, and as a mother of five children, I'm very concerned, concerned about the lack of jobs today and concerned about the impact of government policy on long-term opportunity in Ontario.

On this government's watch, Ontario has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs and created 300,000 bureaucratic jobs. Nearly a million Ontarians are out of work. At the same time, experts tell us that, within a few years, we will have a million skilled-trade jobs left unfilled if the status quo doesn't change. The solution is not complicated, but it will require courage and conviction.

First, this government needs to restore balance to the province's books. Spending must be brought in line with revenues so Ontario can get back on a solid, competitive economic footing. Right now, almost 10% of government revenue goes to debt payments. That's a millstone hanging around our necks, and it endangers every single thing that we value.

Alongside that, I would suggest two more key priorities that speak to the focus of Bill 172. First, government needs to encourage more people to enter the skilled trades. Second, government needs to remove existing barriers to matching people with jobs, just like the member from Durham has just spoken about.

In light of the concerns I've described and the very personal interest I have as an opposition critic and as a mother, I'm obviously very interested in proposed legislation that announces its allegiance to work-integrated learning.

1540

But despite this encouraging start, Bill 172 is thin on specific details relating to the functions of its proposed advisory council which would advise the ministry with respect to work-integrated-learning opportunities. This quickly starts to look like just another level of bureaucracy, another body that is more concerned with branding itself as solutions-driven than actually bringing forward real solutions to the real problems Ontarians and Ontario students face.

I mentioned my children earlier. My son, Mac, is pursuing a career in marine mechanics. He's loving it, and we both hope it will be a prosperous career for him. But he found that path and that passion himself. Nobody fostered that passion in him or showed him the way forward. Luckily, he's a strong self-starter and he found opportunity on his own. But for many more young people like him, that path might not be as clear. The system isn't helping them as much as they deserve, and neither will this bill, as it stands.

Bill 172 contains no specific details describing how the jobs and work internships necessary to the council's mandate would be created. Where are the workplace opportunities going to come from? Not from this government, obviously. Hopefully, we can add some meat to the bones in committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

The member for London West, you have time left from your party and two minutes for your response.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank all the members who offered comments on this bill, in particular the member from Scarborough–Guildwood, the member from Halton, and the members from London–Fanshawe, Huron–Bruce, Kitchener–Waterloo, Durham and Burlington. Many of the comments were very helpful, and I am encouraged by the support—some begrudgingly—that generally has been expressed for the bill.

There were a couple of issues raised that I wanted to respond to directly. The member from Scarborough–Guildwood talked about what the government is currently doing with the Co-operative Education Tax Credit. That is great, that financial assistance that's offered to employers to participate in one particular kind of WIL, but there are many other forms of work-integrated learning and there's no other financial assistance to support employers who participate in those kinds of programs.

The research that I was involved with for HEQCO found that 61% of employers do not participate in work-integrated learning. They don't offer these kinds of opportunities for students. They talked about some of the barriers that prevent them from being involved. In particular, lack of financial support was a barrier for employers, because there are costs involved in appropriately integrating a quality learning experience when you have a student in the workplace.

I also wanted to respond to some of the concerns that were raised by my colleagues to the right here about the creation of a new bureaucracy. I liked what the member

for Kitchener–Waterloo had to say about the costs of doing nothing. We know there's considerable research on the cost savings to employers in terms of recruitment when they are able to participate in work-integrated-learning programs and screen potential new hires in the workplace. These cost savings to employers can be huge. So by enabling more employers to participate in providing these programs, we contribute to the future productivity of our firms in the province.

In particular, I mentioned in my comments about the benefits of the work of the advisory council on work-integrated learning for SMEs. Currently, institutions have relationships with individual employers but there is no centralized one-stop access for employers to find out about what programs are available within their area, what kinds of skills the students coming from those programs would bring to the workplace. The website that is referenced in my bill would directly address that concern.

Finally, I want to say to the member for Scarborough–Agincourt that I really like what she said about the need to acknowledge workplace safety for young people. That's an important component, and I would be pleased to talk about that further when the bill goes to committee, as I hope it will.

I want to again thank all of the members who spoke to my legislation for your feedback and your support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote at the end of private members' business.

FINANCIAL ADVISORS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR

LES CONSEILLERS FINANCIERS

Mr. Bartolucci moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 157, An Act to regulate financial advisors / Projet de loi 157, Loi réglementant les conseillers financiers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: Before I start my comments, I want to recognize three people who are in the gallery today. They're from Advocis: Greg Pollock, Peter Tzanetakis and Kristin Doucet. I want to publicly thank them for the incredible efforts that they have put forth with this piece of legislation.

It would be remiss if I didn't also mention Eric Chamney. He's a lawyer from the office of the legislative counsel. We don't normally recognize them, but this was a very, very complex piece of legislation, and I do want to thank him and them so much for working together.

Last month, I tabled Bill 157, the Financial Advisors Act, 2014. If passed, the bill would protect consumers by requiring financial advisers to participate in a professional body. It would raise education standards for financial advisers, ensure adherence to a code of professional and ethical conduct, and create a disciplinary process. The bill would enhance confidence in the sector and protect consumers.

In the current environment, anybody can set up shop and call themselves financial advisers, regardless of their licences, training, education or ethics. This can put Ontarians at major risk as they take financial advice from people who may not necessarily be experts, or may actually be out to harm them. Bill 157 creates an oversight mechanism for individuals who hold themselves out to the public as financial advisers, and requires membership in a recognized professional body.

Financial advisers are one of the last groups of specialized practitioners whose professional title is not protected in law. Examples of practitioners whose titles are protected in law include doctors, lawyers, accountants and engineers, just to mention a few. It is time to put financial advisers on the path to professional status.

Last year, I was approached by Advocis, the Financial Advisors Association of Canada, during their annual Legislature day. Michael Vagnini, a former student of mine, and Allain Labelle, who are Advocis members from Sudbury, explained to me that day that anyone can call himself or herself a financial adviser, and that consumers do not necessarily know if they are dealing with an ethical, qualified financial adviser.

I was shocked by this statement, given Ontario's multitude of regulators, including the Ontario Securities Commission and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, not to mention the Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada and the Mutual Fund Dealers Association of Canada. These are self-regulatory bodies that have the regulatory authority to oversee financial service representatives in the sale of investment products.

But it's true: Unfortunately for Ontarians, anyone can claim to be a financial adviser, and currently our regulators' hands are virtually tied. The only time our regulators will intervene is if it happens to be within their jurisdiction of product regulation, or in a case that is brought forward and an investigation is initiated with an accusation of fraud. In my view, this is a case of too little, too late for those unsuspecting individuals, people like you and I whose lives have been turned upside down by a fraudster or unqualified adviser.

1550

Not only is the title of "financial adviser" not protected in law; the standard for adviser conduct varies greatly among advisers. This—to me, to them, to everyone—is a major concern. While our provincial regulators enforce initial eligible requirements prior to issuing life insurance and securities licences for the sale of life insurance and investment products, there is no consistent oversight of adviser conduct.

Membership in a professional association like Advocis, for example, is entirely voluntary. In Ontario, Advocis has 5,000 members that adhere to education standards and a code of conduct; however, there are over 40,000 individuals in Ontario who claim to be financial advisers. Where do they belong? Are they adhering to a code of conduct and high continuing-education standards?

While there are a few groups out there, it is evident to me that the standards are all over the map. Bill 157 changes that as it moves to create more uniform standards across the industry.

Financial advisers, as we know, play a fundamental role in raising the financial literacy of their clients. They help Ontarians prepare for important events and needs throughout their lives and to become more financially self-sufficient. Consumers value the advice they receive from their advisers. Financial advisers help Ontarians to save and plan for their future and to protect the savings they have accumulated through comprehensive planning and a wide range of life and health insurance and investment opportunities.

People who receive advice accumulate more financial wealth, are better protected, and are better prepared for retirement and unexpected events. Financial security and independence are important to Ontarians. That transparency and clarity are precisely why I was compelled to address these glaring problems through the introduction of Bill 157.

Again, I would like to thank Advocis for their incredible work throughout this extremely complex bill. I look forward to working with them in the future as well. They presented a well-thought-out proposal that covers many key issues that needed to be addressed. But what I was most impressed with was that Advocis—and I commend them for this—brought this issue forward from the consumer's perspective, first and foremost. To me, that's a sign of individuals who want something to happen in the best interests of Ontarians.

Here are some of the specifics regarding the proposed legislation. If passed, the legislation would offer Ontario consumers an accessible complaint-handling mechanism and would provide easier access to review an adviser's credentials and complaints history.

Further, the professional body for financial advisers would have the authority to—and there are several here:

- establish a code of professional and ethical conduct;
- establish specializations and recognize those organizations, such as Advocis, that meet a standard;
- require the members to maintain errors and omissions professional liability insurance to protect consumers;
- require minimum initial proficiency standards for members;
- require continuing education, addressing substantive and professional matters;
- establish a governance structure that includes both advisers and representation from the public;
- establish a complaints and disciplinary process, with powers to suspend an adviser's membership; and
- provide public access to check an adviser's credentials and disciplinary history.

Anyone presenting as a financial adviser would have to register with the new body irrespective of other professions; however, as stated earlier, Bill 157 would not apply to those working in certain professions already governed under separate acts and whereby they are not

holding out as financial advisers. These include—let me repeat—lawyers, accountants, real estate brokers, mortgage brokers, property and casualty insurance brokers, and bank employees offering advice on simple deposit projects such as savings accounts and guaranteed income certificates.

Ontario would be the first jurisdiction in Canada to introduce such comprehensive oversight of financial advisers. Bill 157 is a first and would make Ontario a leader in consumer protection and professional standards for all financial advisers.

What we are talking about is not unlike the recent unification of the accounting profession in Ontario that brought the CAs, CMAs and CGAs under the same tent. High standards and reputable designations can and should be recognized, as the proposed legislation calls for the recognition of such standards through the creation of specializations. These details would be outlined in the regulations and subsequent administrative agreements once the legislation is passed.

The other important element of Bill 157 is that it lays the groundwork for the evolution of the regulatory environment of financial advisers where a government is providing an effective streamlined form of regulation and eliminates as much duplication as possible without watering down the consumer protection gaps it needs to address. You know that our government has worked diligently in recent years to reduce duplication of regulation. The objective of Bill 157 is to ensure that the new body oversees the profession of financial advisers, like all other professions in the province.

Current regulation is focused on the sale and distribution of product, with each sector, including mutual funds, life insurance and securities, having its own set of regulations and regulators. Ultimately, these costs are borne by the consumer. This bill, for the first time in history, would directly regulate all advisers, regardless of the products they are selling. This harmonized approach will streamline and simplify the regulatory process.

In closing, all Ontarians would benefit under Bill 157. Let me conclude by simply saying that the financial services product providers and distributors who are such an important part of Ontario's high-value-added service economy will benefit greatly as well. Moving to a profession of financial advisers will support the recruitment of new advisers into the industry through enhanced professional standing. This will result in tremendous economic opportunity and growth as the industry around the profession will flourish. At the very end of the day, it has to be a win-win situation: a win for the consumer and a win for financial advisers. If they win, we win.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to rise today to speak to Bill 157, the Financial Advisors Act. I have to start by saying to you that I don't often agree with the member from Sudbury, but the point that all Ontarians must have protection for their nest egg I think is something we can all agree on.

Over the past number of weeks, I've had the opportunity to meet with several stakeholders within the financial service sector to discuss Bill 157, and it is abundantly clear that there is much division within the industry with regard to the legislation. The member from Sudbury said it best himself, that his bill covers many of the issues but not all of the issues. Most have said there is a need to enhance consumer protection by increasing professional standards for financial advisers and that the risks to consumers are far too great to allow simply anyone to call themselves a financial adviser. I couldn't agree more.

The government, however, is confusing matters by having two simultaneous issues going on. One is this private member's bill, and the other is the ministry holding consultations in advance of their own bill coming forward.

Let me take a moment to address some of the concerns that I've heard with regard to this legislation from stakeholders. First, there is a concern that this bill appears to come forward with very little consultation of the industry as a whole. The vast majority of Ontario financial advisers licensed to sell financial products are regulated, which also raises questions about the potential for jurisdictional duplication and overlap. There is concern the bill will add more bureaucracy and red tape, one of the things Ontarians told us is killing jobs and investment during our pre-budget hearings, when we toured those eight cities. The last thing we need right now in Ontario is more red tape and more costly bureaucracy.

We've shown this week that the government has provided inaccurate information regarding the state of our finances. We can't afford to implement legislation that will add to the growing debt burden and act as a deterrent to job creation and economic growth. I quite frankly would like the government to come forward and express what they have planned, as I know the Ministry of Finance hears the same concerns that I've heard. If the government truly wanted to do something about this, then they would table a government bill, not a private member's bill.

1600

In closing, I want to stress that it is important that we do what we can in this Legislature to safeguard consumers when it comes to their investment. For many, we're talking about their life savings, money they plan to use for their retirement. I believe we all want the same thing at the end of the day, and our caucus will work to get a proper bill enacted to protect the consumer.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: Congratulations to my colleague from Sudbury for bringing this bill forward.

I want to preface my remarks with a couple of things. First of all, it is my intention to support the bill. Everything you're going to hear you may not like, but I think I need to stand up here, first of all, and say that I'm going to support the bill in the final analysis today, because it is a bill that needs to come.

A couple of weeks ago, if you had the opportunity to be watching CBC news, there was a compelling docu-

mentary about financial planners. They went in with hidden television cameras to some of the big banks and financial institutions across the country and sought ordinary advice from people who hung out a shingle and said, "We are financial planners."

Some of that advice was absolutely abysmal. The consequences we saw as a result of that bad advice included broken marriages. There was one man who had lost his business, his wife, his children, his house, everything, as a result of advice that was so—I don't know what other word to use—preposterous that it ought not to have ever been given in the first place.

It was quite clear at the end of the show that the banks and financial institutions who had hired some of these people, or allowed them to practise inside the building or inside the institution, were taken aback as well by the people who were in their employ or under their control. So there's no doubt in my mind at all that we need to go somewhere with this.

I did have the opportunity, as did my colleague from Nipissing, who just spoke, to meet with some of the other groups, though, that are not quite so enamoured of the bill as my friends in Advocis. I consider my friendship with the people in Advocis to be a building one and a good one. It has now been some 10 or 12 years since I first made their acquaintance and got to know what their industry is all about. I trust very much the advice they have given, and I am sure they have given all the best advice to my friend from Sudbury.

However, I did have an opportunity to sit down around a little table in my constituency office last Friday with a group of people who were opposed, who came and quite frankly shocked me. But what they talked about was something that I think we need to deal with, as and when and if this bill moves forward past the reading today and into committee.

Those people who came to see me came from the Financial Planning Standards Council, the Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada, and the Canadian Federation for Advancement of Investor Rights. They also alluded, although that person was not there, to the Coalition for Professional Standards, which I think all of them belong to anyway.

I think what they had to say was profound. I think it was important, and I don't think it in any way negates what is trying to be done here today. But what they were asking for was caution. They were asking for us to proceed slowly on this. They were asking for some public hearings, and they need to get their head around exactly where they're going. What they said was that discussions were essential.

They were worried about a couple of things that I could easily put my finger on, that didn't require consultation. They were worried because they were not sure, within the body of the bill as it presently exists, to which ministry a new agency might report, an overarching one. Would it go to the Ministry of Finance—which is logical because everything else now goes through the Minister of Finance—or would it go to the Ministry of Consumer

Services? I wasn't sure either when I read the bill, and I think they had a fairly good point.

They gave me a couple of journals which I'd like to quote from. I shouldn't say journals; they were more like small news articles. I thought the small news articles pointed it out fairly well. I think this is what we have to get our heads around as legislators, and it's also what we need to get our heads around when and if this goes to committee, because these questions have to be answered, and they have to be asked, and people have to make deputations. We need to make sure that whatever bill we finally get at the end of this, it works for the people of Ontario. If we get the bill wrong, then the circumstances that we saw on CBC, in that documentary, will continue. If we get the bill right, we can put an end to it and at the same time bring all the people under one big umbrella group.

I have been here in this Legislature for a while, and I have seen many of the groups come forward and try to come to some kind of agreement to have an umbrella organization for their respective disciplines. I know we still have not succeeded in getting the engineers all together. We keep trying, but we can't get them all to agree. We tried to get the accountants all together, and yet, after a couple of years, they are still in negotiations to bring the various accounting bodies together, and that hasn't happened. So I think we need to do it right, and we need to get it ready at the beginning.

What was written in these two articles—I'd just like to quote a little bit, because I think they were well written, and perhaps members who haven't seen them should look them up.

The first one is entitled "The Best Regulatory Approach?" Fiona Collie writes, in part:

"However, other sector associations believe this approach would not work because of the disparate nature of the financial services business.

"Cary List, president and CEO of the Financial Planning Standards Council (FPSC) in Toronto, argues that the term 'financial adviser' is too generic and does not represent the numerous careers in the financial planning sector and the different skills required for each. However, he adds: 'The notion of professionalizing or raising the standard for all financial advisers is an admirable one.'"

It goes on to quote Mr. List further: "'We think a tailored approach to financial planners is a more tenable solution than to capture the entire universe of all licensed individuals.'"

It goes on—and I'm mindful of the time—to also quote people from the IIAC and from the Independent Financial Brokers of Canada, which was the only body, that I could tell, that was opposed to the legislation. The others wanted to work within the system and try to iron out the wrinkles.

There are also a couple of excellent articles under the title *Investment Executive*, written by Keith Costello, which I think some of the members may have seen. Mr. Costello, in his March 9, 2014, newsletter, writes in part:

"In particular, financial advisers or financial planners should be concerned with three issues in Bill 157, An Act to regulate financial advisors, which was introduced by Rick Bartolucci, a Liberal member of provincial Parliament (MPP) for Sudbury, Ont.:

"Issue 1 is that the regulations in the act governing the financial adviser, and his or her advice, is very prescriptive and intrusive.

"Issue 2 is what body will ultimately oversee this act?

"And issue 3 is how does this act fit in with the Ontario government's sponsored consultations on regulating financial planning in Ontario, considering that Bill 157 was introduced by a member of Ontario's Liberal provincial government. Are you confused?"

At the end of the article, I think a very good suggestion was made: "Thus, the government should take the good ideas from Bill 157 and allow existing regulators to oversee them, but only after they amalgamate the Ontario Securities Commission with the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, and the Mutual Fund Dealers Association of Canada with the Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada. This new streamlined regulatory structure is best to achieve this act's objectives."

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, so that I leave some time for my friend, I support this bill. I think we need to have this discussion. The vehicle to have this discussion is in the committee. I welcome the good and sage advice that I have always received from Advocis, but I also want to hear from those groups that are not fully on board.

1610

When and if this bill is introduced for third reading, I think all of us need to know that the bill has satisfied all of the objections, that all of the financial planners in Ontario are on board, and that the result will be the finest financial planning body and regulations that this country has. The people of Ontario's profits, the people of Ontario's savings are too important to leave to unregulated financial planners.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very pleased to stand today to speak with my colleague on Bill 157, the Financial Advisors Act. The member from Sudbury is bringing this forward. As we have been talking about, if passed, it will require financial advisers to be members of a professional body. It would also set out education standards for financial advisers, a code of ethics and a disciplinary process.

When I look at the bill, it has all the hallmarks of a good regulatory piece. There's a complaint mechanism, there are provisions for continuing education, there's a governance structure, reasonable exemption and many other provisions. It's a very well-thought-out bill.

The member from Sudbury has, of course, brought this forward with the intention of protecting the public. As the Minister of Consumer Services, I'm always interested in things that protect the public, especially consumers. As many people have heard me say in this House, when we

have protection of consumers and strong consumer confidence, that is good for our economy.

I'd also like to acknowledge Advocis for being strong advocates on this issue and for the work they've done with the MPP from Sudbury to bring this forward. They work really hard here at Queen's Park, not just with the MPP from Sudbury, but in briefing us all here at Queen's Park and in many, if not all, of our constituency offices. Thank you so much for the work you've been doing.

I used to work at Manulife Financial, so I know a little about this sector—not everything, but I know a little bit. I know the role of financial advisers in Ontario, and I think we all know how they help people plan and save for their future, and raise the level of financial literacy for their clients. They help us all prepare for those very important moments in life; in fact, for many of our financial needs throughout our lives. They also help clients protect the savings they have accumulated over time. People who get good advice in this area tend to accumulate more wealth and are therefore better prepared for retirement's unexpected events.

As a government, we've certainly worked hard to increase consumer protection and awareness in recent years. We have had a number of things introduced. I think when we look at this act that's being proposed, it is going to strengthen the work that we've been doing to make our economy stronger and support consumers.

I'm really happy to see my colleague bring this bill forward. I know he has worked very hard at it.

I worry when you have a profession where, as the member said, anyone can hang their shingle out and present themselves as an expert. Some of them may well be experts, but in this case they're unregulated and they play a really important job, so they deserve this kind of recognition as well.

Hopefully, we can move this to committee and be the first province, I think, in Canada to have this kind of legislation.

Again, congratulations to my colleague.

I am going to share my time with a number of other members, so I'll conclude with that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: First of all, I want to thank the member, Mr. Bartolucci from Sudbury, for Bill 157. I commend him for the bill, first. I want to put a bit of context around it. How I look at it in today's world is, it's more important than ever that we have rules.

One disappointment I have—you and I spoke on this the other day, and I commend you for bringing it forward. I am a little disappointed that it's not a government bill, because a private member's bill allows us to discuss it, and then it usually gets filed in the circular file. I don't mean that to be mean to you, but I'm saying, because we're all speaking pretty much in favour of it—in the climate today, especially with seniors like myself and funds that need to be properly managed, low interest and living longer, people are going to have to really take care of those pennies.

I'm one of them; I'm over 70. I worked 30 years at General Motors and I'm 19 years here. We have a sort of pension plan here, sort of. It's not a pension, really; it's a defined contribution registered pension plan. After 19 years, I have \$272,000 in that fund. Why? Because in 2008, the funds we got to pick went into the ditch by about 22%. It's tragic. Now, if I look at \$272,000, after I get it in my hand, I have about \$135,000, because it's all taxed. Plus once you get to \$73,000, they claw all your universal benefits back. We are in a deep ditch in the market.

Here's the problem: There are many scammers in the system, even though there are regulators. The Mutual Fund Dealers Association is regulated nationally. You guys all know this; I'm just saying it for the record here. The IDA, the Investment Dealers Association—when I was in finance, Joe Oliver was the CEO of the IDA at that time. They are regulated and have standards. What we're mixed up with here is financial planners and certified financial planners.

What the customer, the consumer—you and I—need to have is certainty on standards, oversight and enforcement. There has to be some clarity within the OSC itself in terms of—they have an inherent conflict in their structure as well. They set the regulations, investigate them, enforce them and prosecute them. There should be a separation of issues there. We should have an enforcement branch that treats all of them and resolves disputes with all those different people selling paper. It protects consumers, promotes professional, ethical behaviour within the industry, and professionalizes it.

As said by other speakers, it's a shark's game out there, quite honestly. Look at Bernie Madoff when he started off. They're there. I think it's really important in the context—just a couple of weeks ago, I watched the movie *The Wolf of Wall Street*. It's just tragic. For anybody who hasn't seen that movie yet, it's terrible.

I leave it at that. I commend the member. I would support it and hope it goes to committee so we can clean it up and make sure we provide the right tools for the professionals in the marketplace.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just heard a Conservative at the beginning of that say that we need more rules. Something has happened. Tell that to your red tape critic.

I want to commend the member from Sudbury for bringing forward this bill. It is needed. It is needed, although I think that we have heard from the various stakeholders across the province that they can't quite agree on what the best course is, going forward.

The timing is, of course, very interesting. The Ministry of Finance has only recently begun their consultation process on this very issue. One can hope that this bill, moving forward, if it gets called, would actually inform part of that process. But I think that the member's intention is to try to hold his own government accountable to put some of these measures in place. For us, we share that concern. We don't know exactly what the way

is going forward, but we certainly are going to work towards finding a solution.

What I am interested in is the public consultation and the people coming forward and sharing their stories, because I know for a fact that you will hear some heartbreaking stories from people who have been victims of so-called financial advisers—and sometimes those people are family members, which gets extra messy. I know that when those people come forward to this House to share their personal stories, those emotional stories—because this is often their life savings—those stories will be compelling, because they are real stories that affect Ontarians because some of those safeguards have not been put in place. I suspect some of those people will come into this House and say that perhaps this government should get some good financial advice as well.

Of course, we are going to be supporting the member. I know that he isn't running again, but if this is your last hurrah, it's a good hurrah.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I rise today in support of the member from Sudbury, MPP Bartolucci, and his private member's bill, the Financial Advisors Act, 2014.

Kris Birschard is in the gallery today, and he has certainly spoken to me several times over the last few years about the importance of bringing this type of legislation forward.

1620

Finances are on the minds of Ontario families. The people of Ontario and in my riding of Ottawa—Orléans work hard for their earnings and should feel confident trusting the level and quality of financial advice available to them. By holding every financial adviser to the same standards and ethics, we can ensure that people have the assurance of safely investing in their families and their futures: not much different from my friend Shafiq here, who follows all the rules of the medical profession—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'll remind the member that he should refer to colleagues by riding.

Mr. Phil McNeely: —and I follow all the rules of the engineers when I'm practising.

The changes proposed will standardize the rules and regulations for financial advisers. A code of ethics would be established, and financial advisers would be held accountable to following that code. If a financial adviser is found to be conducting himself or herself unethically, the office of the director would have the power to impose financial penalties and suspend or revoke licences. This means that families in Ottawa—Orléans and across the province can invest safely, knowing that their registered adviser is safeguarding their interests. This will leave constituents with the peace of mind needed to plan and invest for life's milestones, such as the purchase of their first home, post-secondary education for their children, and a comfortable retirement.

The bill is a win-win for both investors and investment advisers. Should this bill pass, investors in my riding will

have the ability to identify the qualities and proficiencies of an adviser through the database of registered financial advisers. They will have the means for disciplinary action in the case of foul play, and they will have a platform to share consumer input.

The financial advising industry will benefit from the restoration of credibility and professionalism. They will have the ability to add input into the regulation of the profession, and it will allow for an opportunity to consolidate and integrate regulations. The act will ensure a level of accountability and will protect the consumer.

My colleague from Sudbury is presenting this bill to address an area of concern for his constituents and constituents across the province. I urge all members to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: I am pleased to stand and talk for a few minutes on behalf of the member from Sudbury and his private member's bill, the Financial Advisers Act, Bill 157, and I wish the member from Sudbury and his Wolves all the best in the OHL playoffs which are under way.

Coming up in late April, we're going to have our annual Advocis Day here at Queen's Park. This will be the third straight year that I have been a part of meeting with financial advisers from Advocis and financial advisers from my community in the Quinte area, and this will be the third straight year that I'm going to hear the same message, I'm sure: that we need to raise the bar when it comes to financial advisers and their profession.

Previously, I was the small business and red-tape critic for Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, and as the member from Kitchener-Waterloo alluded to moments ago, we don't usually hear from industry that they want to add red tape or regulation. This is one of the rare occurrences where we have heard from a group who want to protect the integrity of their industry, which has been under attack because of a few bad apples that are out there. There are a few so-called snakes in the grass, and we have heard about that this afternoon. They are taking advantage of people's retirement savings, they are taking advantage of people's trust in them, and in some cases they are actually losing everything they have.

The problem is, in Ontario, anybody can be a financial adviser. So what we need to do is work with groups like Advocis, who have been pushing this, and help them raise the bar. As the member from Durham alluded to a few moments ago, though, if the government was serious about this, they would have made this a government bill.

That's where we get into some of the concern about duplication or overlap. What we really want to do is protect the retirement savings and the savings plans and the future prosperity of Ontarians who are trying to do the responsible thing: They are trying to save their money; they're trying to invest their money in the proper places so that they can turn what they have into more.

The head of my local Advocis chapter is Shannon Neely. He's a good friend of mine, and he has come here

the last two years on the lobby day. We're not trying to stop anybody from becoming a financial adviser. We just want to make sure that our financial advisers are trained properly, that they are certified, so that when they give Ontarians financial advice, they are giving them the best financial advice that they possibly can. Again, the goal is to get rid of those bad apples in the industry.

Advocis and others out there want to institute a common professional standard that all 40,000 financial advisers in Ontario would have to meet, and I believe that's what the goal of the bill is. So while we are a bit concerned about red tape with this bill, what we really want to do is get this bill into committee and then turn it into a bill that truly raises the bar for financial advisers across the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I'm very happy today to stand in support of Bill 157 and my colleague from Sudbury.

Before I start, I'd like to recognize Kris Birchard in the gallery. Kris Birchard is from Advocis. He's a friend of mine. He has been a great advocate on this issue, and I'd just like to thank him for being here today, and for all his help. It's very much appreciated.

I'm sure that many of the members here today all agree that raising the bar in this industry is an important thing to do. One of the reasons that we are here is to try and collectively do the best we can to protect each other in many different ways.

I know that I was shocked a number of years ago, before I was in the Legislature, in meeting with Kris, hearing that anybody could just hang out a shingle and say, "I'm a financial adviser." I didn't believe that could happen.

I know that Ontarians work hard to earn their money, and when they seek guidance on how they can invest that money, they put themselves at risk. They're putting a person in a position of trust. Ontarians need to know that they are protected, so that when they do make those investments, they can do it with some confidence.

This bill, if passed, will:

- establish a code of professional and ethical conduct;
- establish specializations and recognize organizations, such as Advocis, that meet that standard;
- require that members maintain errors-and-omissions professional liability insurance to protect consumers; and
- require minimum initial proficiency standards for members.

Mr. Speaker, protecting consumers and building confidence in the financial advice services industry is the right thing to do.

I would like to remind the members opposite of the value of private members' bills. I know that they've been saying that they would like to have seen government legislation. I do know that private members' bills do work their way into governmental legislation and do get passed and do make a difference.

I'm very proud to stand today, speaking in support of Bill 157 and all the efforts that have gone forward. I'll

leave a little bit of time for my colleague the member from Ottawa Centre.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: And a fabulous riding it is. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In general, I support the protection of consumers and welcome any legislation that's going to provide such protection. But if we really want to enhance public confidence in the reliability of financial markets, then you need to table a bill that will do just that: protect the integrity of capital markets, safeguard investor confidence, and regularly review the Securities Act to ensure that the legislation in Ontario is up to date and that it properly and proactively protects investors and fosters a fair and efficient marketplace.

My cousin Paul Walker, from Walker-Bumstead Financial, is one of those. He's a member of Advocis. He is a certified financial planner and does a great job. Certainly, he wants to ensure that his industry as a whole is doing that.

My colleague from Prince Edward county suggested that there are some bad apples up there, and that's certainly not a good thing.

Someone from my riding has brought in numerous concerns to my office. Steven Brockhouse, of Annan, has voiced valid concerns on numerous times with the minister and his predecessor, the Premier, and her predecessor, about the lack of rights and recourse for investors who fall prey to companies that make misleading or untrue statements, or fail to give full and timely information.

Mr. Brockhouse, alongside another 1,000 people, fell victim to First Lease and are strong examples of the damage that can be done to investors, pensioners, communities and markets if we continue—like the Liberals have done in their 10 years—to sit by idly and do nothing.

This is a private member's bill, as I believe my colleague from Durham, John O'Toole, has said. Unless the will of the government is to move that forward expeditiously, it's going to die in the circular bin.

We would have liked to have seen a whole more fulsome piece of legislation brought by the government. Protecting consumers and ensuring, as Advocis is trying to do, that the investor has full protection and security is something we should all be paying attention to.

1630

Given the importance of protecting these people, why are we doing patchwork with a private member's bill? Where is the Liberal government's own bill? Why are they not taking this seriously, particularly with the financial jeopardy that they've created for our province?

March is Fraud Prevention Month. This administration should recognize it by tabling a comprehensive govern-

ment bill to deal with the myriad issues plaguing the financial sector.

I've even got a letter here from Rachel Desmarais, again from Owen Sound. She's actually a member of the Independent Financial Brokers of Canada. She's voicing concerns about duplication of effort, and all of the regulations that she now has to put up with.

I want to hear from both sides. We need to ensure that any legislation we put in this House—she has really said it, and it's been very typical of this government: lack of consultation with the sector, rushing something to the table and expecting us just to say yes.

We definitely want to protect the consumer. We need to get it to committee, where we can actually review it and put good legislation forward for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Before I move on to the next speaker: Can I have a little quiet in the House? I'm trying to hear the speakers, and it's very difficult, because there are about 20 conversations going on.

Further debate? The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me and giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 157.

I want to start with a point that I think has been mentioned a few times: Year after year, we have heard from our friends from Advocis about the need to regulate financial advisers to make sure that there is consumer protection for financial advisers. I have heard members from all three parties talking about their desire to do the same, so I am very excited.

I want to congratulate the member from Sudbury for finally taking this step and putting forward Bill 157. Talk is cheap; action matters, and in this case the member from Sudbury has shown action in putting forward a very comprehensive bill which gives us the opportunity to work together on this very important issue.

I want to acknowledge our friends from Advocis who are here today—Greg Pollock, Peter Tzanetakakis, Kristin Doucet and our very good friend from Ottawa, Kris Birchard—for their hard work and advocacy, and for educating all of us on the need and necessity to have a bill like Bill 157.

I've also heard, too many times now, "Where is the government bill?" and I think members know—especially the official opposition; if they read the budget document, they will know—that the government is also working on this issue. I quote from page 167 of the budget: "People need access to informed, professional financial advice to ensure that their investment decisions serve their financial goals. Financial planning is not currently subject to general regulatory oversight or self-regulatory rules. The government will investigate the merits of proceeding with more tailored regulation of financial planners and consider the appropriate regulatory framework for doing so."

Clearly, the budget that this House passed last spring outlines its desire to move in this area to create a self-

regulatory body. I want to congratulate the member from Sudbury for taking it a step further and actually giving us a framework. I think this is a great example where members are paying attention to what government is doing, and government is paying attention to what our stakeholders are talking about and bringing it all together, so that we can create good rules and regulations.

I'm hopeful that this bill will pass second reading and will go to committee, so that we can hear from all interested parties, but at the end of the day the most fundamental issue is to provide consumer confidence, to provide that guarantee, that assurance—to citizens, to our constituents and especially to senior citizens, who have worked extremely hard to save their money—that there is a safeguard mechanism, that there is regulation of financial advisors, and that their hard-earned money is being treated with respect by professionals. I want to again congratulate Advocis for bringing these issues forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Oh, my apologies. The member from Sudbury, I forgot you. I'm so concerned that you've got to leave. You have two minutes for your response.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, you certainly never have to apologize. My remarks will be very, very brief.

I just want to thank everyone who spoke to this legislation. I hope it goes to committee. I hope it passes. I hope we have public input, and I hope that, at the end of the day, what we finally vote on at third reading is a powerful piece of legislation that will make a difference in the lives of not only financial advisers but the people we protect: the people of Ontario who choose to invest their money.

To the member from Nipissing, the member from Beaches–East York, the Minister of Consumer Services, the members from Durham, Kitchener–Waterloo, Ottawa–Orléans, Prince Edward–Hastings and Ottawa South, the Minister of Labour and the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound: Thank you very much for your comments. I look forward to further debate on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time has expired for private members' public business.

GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT POLICIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 79, standing in the name of Mr. Hatfield.

Mr. Hatfield has moved private members' notice of motion number 63. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

LEARNING THROUGH WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'APPRENTISSAGE PAR L'EXPÉRIENCE EN MILIEU DE TRAVAIL

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Sattler has moved second reading of Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act to establish the Advisory Council on Work-Integrated Learning.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the bill is referred to the committee—I would ask the member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Agreed? Agreed.

FINANCIAL ADVISORS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LES CONSEILLERS FINANCIERS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Bartolucci has moved second reading of Bill 157, An Act to regulate financial advisors.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the member for Sudbury?

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: I'd like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the standing committee on finance. Agreed? Agreed.

Orders of the day?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands adjourned until 10:30 a.m. on Monday the 24th.

The House adjourned at 1638.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough–Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉES PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
des services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle**

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Continued from back cover

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh 5985

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Business community

Mr. Ernie Hardeman 5985

Parliament Oak Public School

Mr. Wayne Gates 5985

Ontario budget

Ms. Mitzie Hunter 5985

Mathematics education

Mr. Rob Leone 5986

Kyle and Paula Watson family

Mme France Gélinas 5986

Nowruz

Ms. Helena Jaczek 5986

Seniors' health services

Mr. Frank Klees 5986

La Francophonie

M. John Fraser 5987

Jim Flaherty

Mr. John O'Toole 5987

Wearing of ribbons

Hon. Michael Chan 5987

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

**MPP Salary Freeze Act, 2014, Bill 177, Mr. Sousa /
Loi de 2014 sur le gel des traitements des députés,
projet de loi 177, M. Sousa**

First reading agreed to 5987

**Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014, Bill 178,
Ms. Matthews / Loi de 2014 sur le don de sang
volontaire, projet de loi 178, Mme Matthews**

First reading agreed to 5987

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Members' compensation

Hon. Charles Sousa 5988

Blood donation

Hon. Deborah Matthews 5988

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Hon. Michael Coteau 5989

Members' compensation

Mr. Victor Fedeli 5990

Blood donation

Mrs. Jane McKenna 5990

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Mr. Todd Smith 5990

Blood donation

Mme France Gélinas 5991

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Mr. Michael Prue 5991

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Blood donation

Mme France Gélinas 5992

Minimum wage

Ms. Soo Wong 5992

Ontario College of Trades

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette 5992

Regional centres for the developmentally disabled

Ms. Cheri DiNovo 5992

Greenbelt

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn 5993

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Mrs. Julia Munro 5993

Ranked balloting

Ms. Mitzie Hunter 5993

Small business

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson 5993

Dog ownership

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong 5994

Minimum wage

Mr. John Fraser 5994

Property taxation

Mr. John O'Toole 5994

Long-term care

Mme France Gélinas 5994

Charitable gaming

Mr. Todd Smith 5995

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Government procurement policies

Mr. Percy Hatfield 5995

Hon. Teresa Piruzza 5997

Mr. Jim McDonell 5998

Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	5998	Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	6012
Mr. Steven Del Duca.....	6000	Mr. Michael Prue	6012
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	6001	Hon. Tracy MacCharles	6014
Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	6002	Mr. John O'Toole.....	6014
Mrs. Jane McKenna	6002	Ms. Catherine Fife.....	6015
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	6002	Mr. Phil McNeely.....	6015
Learning Through Workplace Experience Act, 2014,		Mr. Todd Smith.....	6016
Bill 172, Ms. Sattler / Loi de 2014 sur		Mr. John Fraser	6016
l'apprentissage par l'expérience en milieu de		Mr. Bill Walker	6017
travail, projet de loi 172, Mme Sattler		Hon. Yasir Naqvi	6017
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	6003	Mr. Rick Bartolucci.....	6018
Ms. Mitzie Hunter	6005		
Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	6005	Government procurement policies	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	6006	Motion agreed to	6018
Ms. Soo Wong.....	6007		
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	6007	Learning Through Workplace Experience Act, 2014,	
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	6008	Bill 172, Ms. Sattler / Loi de 2014 sur	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6009	l'apprentissage par l'expérience en milieu de	
Mrs. Jane McKenna	6009	travail, projet de loi 172, Mme Sattler	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	6010	Second reading agreed to	6018
Financial Advisors Act, 2014, Bill 157,			
Mr. Bartolucci / Loi de 2014 sur les conseillers		Financial Advisors Act, 2014, Bill 157,	
financiers, projet de loi 157, M. Bartolucci		Mr. Bartolucci / Loi de 2014 sur les conseillers	
Mr. Rick Bartolucci.....	6010	financiers, projet de loi 157, M. Bartolucci	
		Second reading agreed to	6018

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 20 March 2014 / Jeudi 20 mars 2014

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Ontario Immigration Act, 2014, Bill 161, Mr. Coteau / Loi de 2014 sur l'immigration en Ontario, projet de loi 161, M. Coteau

Mr. Jim Wilson	5959
Mr. John Vanthof	5962
Hon. Michael Coteau	5962
Mr. John O'Toole	5963
Mme France Gélinas	5963
Mr. Jim Wilson	5964
Ms. Peggy Sattler	5964
Ms. Soo Wong	5967
M. Jerry J. Ouellette	5967
M. Michael Mantha	5967
Hon. Michael Coteau	5967
Ms. Peggy Sattler	5968
L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5968
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5969

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Monte Kwinter	5969
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5969
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	5969
Ms. Soo Wong	5969
Mr. John O'Toole	5969
Mme France Gélinas	5969
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	5970
Mr. Bill Walker	5970
Mr. Robert Bailey	5970

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Fiscal accountability

Mr. Victor Fedeli	5970
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5970
Hon. John Milloy	5970

Fiscal accountability

Mr. Victor Fedeli	5971
Hon. John Milloy	5971

Taxation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5972
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5972

Job creation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5973
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5973

Fiscal accountability

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5973
Hon. John Milloy	5974

Government appointments

Mr. Gilles Bisson	5974
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5974

Immigrants' skills

Mr. Shafiq Qadri	5975
Hon. Michael Coteau	5975

Health care

Mr. Jim Wilson	5975
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5976
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5976

Property taxation

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	5976
Hon. Charles Sousa	5976

Job creation

Mr. Grant Crack	5976
Hon. Eric Hoskins	5977

Wind turbines

Ms. Laurie Scott	5977
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5977
Hon. James J. Bradley	5978

Horse racing industry

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5978
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5978

Sports funding

Ms. Mitzie Hunter	5978
Hon. Michael Chan	5979

Infrastructure renewal

Mr. Ted Chudleigh	5979
Hon. Brad Duguid	5979

Conservation authorities

Ms. Cindy Forster	5980
Hon. David Oraziotti	5980

Release of documents

Hon. John Milloy	5980
Mr. Jim Wilson	5982
Mr. Gilles Bisson	5983
Mr. Victor Fedeli	5983
Mr. Rob Leone	5984
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	5985

Continued on inside back cover

CAZON
71
-1223

Government
of Ontario

No. 116



N° 116

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 24 March 2014

Lundi 24 mars 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 24 March 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 24 mars 2014

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure today to introduce in this assembly my daughter's first babysitter, who has now gone on to become a University of Guelph student. She's from Ottawa West—Nepean. Alanna Fernet is here today. I chose to embarrass her.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: It's my pleasure to introduce the member from York Centre, who turned 83 on Saturday. Congratulations and happy birthday to Monte Kwinter.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's my pleasure today to welcome a constituent of mine from Windsor: Kelly Timm, who is in the gallery today. She is the proud mother of my legislative assistant, Denny Timm, who has joined her for question period this morning.

Mr. Mike Colle: Mazel to my colleague Monte Kwinter on his birthday.

Welcome to CJPAC senior fellow Samuel Mosonyi, CJPAC representatives, the University of Guelph Political Science Society, and all the university students who are here today from Guelph to see question period and participate in the CJPAC political engagement revolving tables lunch. Welcome.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce to you today, in the members' gallery, Kathy Inch, Lynda Murphy, Cynthia Stagg and Kailin Ambrose. They're all here from the Ontario Hairstylists Association. Welcome, girls.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to introduce my EA, Margo Duncan, who's sitting up here today. It was her 65th birthday yesterday. I also informed her that she can't retire till she's 67.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'd like all members of the Legislature to welcome the heart and soul of my Thunder Bay—Superior North constituency office: Crystal Caputo, who is here today with her husband, Frank Caputo. Welcome, Crystal and Frank.

Mr. Rob Leone: I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Maitland Hudak to this world, who was born yesterday morning. To the Hudak family, I wish Deb, Tim and Miller all the best, as well, in welcoming Maitland.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to congratulate our page captain today, Callista Laffrenier. Her proud parents are

here, Karen and Ken, and her sister Caralynn. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Page Isabella O'Brien, who's from my riding, has a family friend, Mark William, who is visiting from Sydney, Australia, and has come in today to watch her in action. I'd like to welcome him.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce my son Josh. He's number two of four kids. Josh, stand up and wave.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Josh, you'd better do what your mother tells you. Sorry; I couldn't resist.

The Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: As was noted, we have quite a group from the University of Guelph here today. The event is co-hosted by the University of Guelph Political Science Society and the Canadian Jewish Political Affairs Committee at the University of Guelph, and it just happens to include a number of members of the University of Guelph Young Liberals: Frank Tersigni, Andrew Quinn, Andrew Gurpat, Musa Mansuar, Steven Inglis and Duncan Tilford. Hi, guys.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce the family members of the page captain today, Megan Barkey. She attends McCaskill's Mills Public School in Cannington. We have family members Dave Barkey, Angelie Barkey—mom and dad—and we have grandparents Dorothy and Edwin Barkey, and I think sister Meredith is here, too. Give us a wave over there. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It gives me great pleasure to ask everyone in this House to join me in welcoming a great friend of mine, Jasmeet Singh Raina, who is also known as Jus Reign, one of the most successful YouTubers in Canada—one of the most popular videos, with millions and millions of views. He's here today, so please give him a round of applause. He's a sensational South Asian, a Sikh Canadian who is doing great work in social media.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to welcome Paul Geukers today to the Legislature. He was a successful bidder in an auction in support of London Health Sciences Centre. Welcome, Paul.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Visiting here for page Divya Dey, on behalf of the member from Etobicoke Centre, are mother Dia Dey and grandmother Indira Dutta. Welcome and thank you for joining us at Queen's Park.

We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery 23 teachers from across the province participating in our inaugural Legislative Assembly of Ontario Teachers' Forum, where workshops are held for teachers to provide more background on how the Legislature works to their

students. Please welcome, with me, our teachers. Thank you very much for our first forum.

I welcome everyone to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My questions are for the Acting Premier. Over the weekend, we heard from a Liberal Party that is dangerously out of touch with reality. Your Premier claimed to offer "safe hands." Well, those safe hands have delivered one million Ontarians into unemployment.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, you can clap for that.

Those safe hands signed a cabinet document to pay \$1.1 billion to cancel the gas plants, and she's clearly using those safe hands to cover her eyes if she can't see the damage the Liberals have done to the province of Ontario. That's why we put forward a motion calling for the Liberals to table a budget by March 31.

1040

Will you support our motion, or will you continue your budget shell game, which we exposed last week?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements only if I ask for them, please.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I really do want to start by welcoming Maitland Hutton Hudak to the world. We're very proud to welcome this newest Ontarian. Congratulations to Tim and Deb.

I'm afraid, Speaker, that what we're witness to here is just another gimmick. I guess we're becoming used to seeing this kind of gimmick from the PCs, especially given that every single budget that they introduced was delivered in May or June. The Leader of the Opposition sat and applauded each one of those budgets, even the one that was not delivered here in the Legislature.

We will be coming forward with a budget shortly. It will be an aspirational plan. It will also be a realistic and practical plan—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will do.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, it's a plan that will create security and opportunity for Ontarians. We're not about slashing and burning on the backs of the middle class.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, we heard last week what "aspirational" means: You aspire to have a great budget; you just don't know how to get there. Is that your idea of governing?

Your minister stands here telling us you've created 400,000 jobs, yet your own documents show us, "There are fewer jobs relative to our population—and more unemployed."

These are the facts you don't want us to see. You get caught, and your plan is to distract from the fact that you have no plan for the 600,000 men and women who woke up this morning without a job. This is the latest example of the Liberals putting their priorities ahead of the needs of the people of Ontario.

It's obvious you don't have a real jobs plan, so use ours. If you choose not to act at all, stand up and face a confidence vote.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West will come to order.

Hon. David Zimmer: Get out of the way, Vic.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs will come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I have been able to glean from the jobs plan of the party opposite is their plan to cut jobs, to slash jobs, to fire nurses, to fire educational workers. That is their plan. It's not about creating jobs; it's about slashing and cutting.

I can tell you that the radical ideas proposed by the party opposite will hurt our hospitals. It will cut home care to our seniors. It would be on the backs of the middle class, Speaker. That's their position. It is definitely not our position.

Our position is about building our future. It's about supporting the wonderful people we have in Ontario. I'm proud of our plan, and I'm afraid of theirs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, you can aspire all you want. I'll pass that message on to the 40 nurses you fired in North Bay already.

Last week, I exposed the \$4.5-billion gap in your budget. Your Premier tried to explain it away by pointing to a potential \$5-billion revenue shortfall in last fall's economic statement. But that gap was from new spending, and I'm not talking about last fall. I'm talking about what you knew and what you said half a year earlier.

In March, you were told by the Ministry of Finance that you were "not on track to meet the 2012 budget deficit targets." Then you went out one month later and told the bond-rating agencies, "The government is on track to meet the budget deficit targets outlined in the 2012 budget."

Why did you tell everybody one thing last March when you knew the complete opposite to be true?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite took six months to read something that we already put out in the public realm. He is only now citing

information that is in fact, as he has just stated, very old. Of course, it's important and prudent for any Minister of Finance or any government to react and recalibrate their spending appropriately to the conditions that are facing them, and that's exactly what we've done.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex will withdraw.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'll withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We've taken the steps necessary to control and be disciplined in our spending. We're the only government that actually cut spending year over year. Ontario is the lowest-cost government in Canada because of the steps and initiatives that we've taken.

Members opposite are only playing slogans and gimmicks, and they are politics of division. They're creating fear and they are hurting the recovery of this province by the antics that they play. We won't stand for that. The people of Ontario deserve better. That is why we're taking the steps that we are to protect their interests.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan/Parapan Am Games. These games have a higher turnover than your Liberal caucus. This Pan Am Friday, we learned you fired two more TO2015 executives, but you replaced them with a McGuinty staffer renowned for scandal-hopping and six-figure salaries. Neala Barton shows up in gas plants, Premier Redford scandals and now Pan Am.

You're in trouble, Minister. You're in big trouble. Tell us how much the soft landings for your disgraced executives have cost, plus Neala Barton's homecoming? How much will it all cost Ontario taxpayers?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

The minister responsible for the Pan/Parapan American Games.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. A new day, a new attack on the Pan Am Games by the member opposite.

TO2015 is working in coordination with the federal government and 15 municipalities to deliver the best games ever for the Pan and Parapan American Games. Part of TO2015's mandate is to ensure an efficient and effective delivery of the games. That includes staffing, streamlining and organizational changes as deemed appropriate.

Staffing decisions are made by the CEO of TO2015. The organizing committee is shifting from the planning stage into the operational stage in the leadup to the games. Recent changes in the management structure were made by the CEO to reflect this new phase.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Let's be clear, Minister: This is not an attack on the Pan Am Games; it's an indictment of your mismanagement of the Pan Am Games. The minister should start handing out medals to executives who actually make it to the end of the games. It's the taxpayers who have to pay for the endless TO2015 personnel mistakes. We pay for the sunshine list salaries. We pay for the teas, pets and parking. We pay their showing-up-for-work bonuses. We pay for their golden parachutes when they're fired, and now we pay for Neala Barton's Liberal Party loyalty.

Minister, this is shamefully unethical at best. Will you step down and take responsibility for once?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you again for the question. The member opposite's allegations have no credibility. Allow me to give you some examples, Speaker. He told the public he did not know—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, come to order.

Hon. Michael Chan: —that the total of the village wasn't in the \$1.4-billion budget. The Toronto Star and the Toronto Sun reported in 2009 that the village cost is outside the TO2015 budget.

Speaker, he says he's a human resources expert, but he has not heard of a completion incentive program. He claims security is going to cost \$1 billion, which is wrong. He claimed Mr. Troop's severance was going to be over \$1 million, which is wrong again. He publicly claimed that our PASO reception in October was five times the actual cost.

Speaker, we are planning the best games ever—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Minister, just so you know, people are watching, so it's about time you started giving some real answers here. At this rate, sadly, you'll be the only one left standing at the end of this. In the end, not even your new communications VP will save you.

Just so you know, Minister, you hired the only person in Canada who was press secretary to McGuinty and Redford the night they resigned. She's also credited for creating a tanning bed issue to detract from the gas plant scandal. Taxpayers should not be paying Liberals a premium for spinning scrutiny away from the Pan Am Games mismanagement. Pan Am is not in safe hands, Minister; neither are you, Neala Barton, by the way.

1050

Minister, since you won't resign, do you think you should be the next one fired for the blatant patronage appointment of Neala Barton?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much again for the question. What people are watching every day is the constant attack of the Pan Am Games by the member opposite.

TO2015 has a mandate to ensure an efficient and effective delivery of the games that includes staffing, streamlining and organizational changes—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

Hon. Michael Chan: This was a decision made by the CEO of TO2015. The member opposite—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order.

Hon. Michael Chan:—continually play politics is an awful shame. The member opposite does not want these games. The member opposite constantly—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge, come to order.

Hon. Michael Chan:—the Pan Am Games. All he's interested in doing is tearing down the games. This is his contribution to the games; to continually badmouth them and embarrass our province to the rest of the world. Shame on you.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. After months of insisting that she was the new leader of a different government, the Premier confirmed this weekend that her backroom advisers have talked her into something different. She's no longer going to promise change; she's going to offer Ontario another dose of Dalton McGuinty and proudly defend the Liberal status quo. For people worried about jobs, that means more of the same approach that's left us with unemployment that is above the national average. Does the Acting Premier really think that this is good enough?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I can tell you that our Premier is demonstrating change every single day. And I do have to say, in reference to our gathering this past weekend: It was an extraordinarily positive, upbeat event. People from across the province are delighted to be supporting such a strong leader.

She has laid out very carefully our six-point plan to create jobs, to have a strong economy. She makes a very clear point that having a strong economy is essential to having a fair society, and that's exactly why she is continuing to plow forward on the issues that the member opposite used to raise.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin the next part of my question, I also want to congratulate, on behalf of New Democrats, Tim Hudak and Deb Hutton on the birth of their child.

Applause.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much.

Now that the Premier has rediscovered her inner McGuinty, she's spinning the same numbers as he did, and they're just about as convincing.

Here are the facts that keep Ontario families nervous: 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost over the last decade; the highest hydro and auto insurance rates in Canada; and an unemployment rate that's still above the national average.

Does the Premier really think it's okay to simply praise the McGuinty record and say, "Steady as she goes"?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I have to say that it's pretty clear that the NDP is a party without a plan. There is no plan. There is no plan for pension security, there is no plan for the minimum wage, and the plan they're putting forward when it comes to the job creator tax credit is simply an unrealistic, impractical plan that would not have the impact that they claim.

I think our plan is clear. It's practical, it's achievable and it's exactly what the province needs right now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Premier talks about the steady hands she shared with Dalton McGuinty. Let's talk about over a decade of Liberal rule and what those hands have brought us. Those Liberal hands signed million-dollar bonus cheques at hydro; those Liberal hands gave a thumbs-up to a billion-dollar payout to move a gas plant and to drive up hydro; those Liberal hands waved goodbye to 300,000 manufacturing jobs over the last decade; and those Liberal hands gave big breaks to auto insurance companies while leaving drivers with skyrocketing bills.

People are hoping for a little better. Why is the Premier suddenly so determined to become Dalton McGuinty 2.0?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, we've created almost 450,000 full-time jobs since the bottom of the recession.

But I have to disagree with the Minister of Health on this, because the NDP does have a jobs plan, and it's to get \$2 billion—that's what finance estimates this will cost—for their job creator tax credit, which has been discredited by the Obama administration, by Democrats and Republicans alike. In the United States, they've found that 92% of the jobs created through this scheme would have been created anyway, and it has been found that it would be subject to abuse, and difficult to administer. So they have a plan. Unfortunately, it's a plan that's going to cost—you haven't costed it out, so I'm going to cost it out for you—\$2 billion annually, and it's not going to work. You are going to give money to businesses that are already, quite frankly, creating jobs in the province.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Today,

the minister was commenting on the possible merger of the hospitals in the Scarborough area. In the Toronto Star, she admitted that hospitals and our entire health care system are facing pressure to make cuts.

She also admitted: “We can’t provide the home care we want for seniors,” and that plans for more housing for people with mental health problems will also be delayed. Can the minister explain what she meant by that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell you is that our action plan for health care is being implemented across the province. It is resulting in better value for money in our health care system and, most importantly, it’s resulting in more people getting the right care at the right time and in the right place.

When it comes to hospital mergers, we are not forcing hospitals to merge, but it’s certainly clear that there are some advantages—if hospital boards decide that that’s the direction they want to go—to merge, to integrate services, to provide higher quality of care in their community. The hospital boards are exploring this. We’re there to support them if indeed they decide to move forward with it.

But my goal remains clear: We must do better when it comes to mental health. We must do better when it comes to improving access to home care. We’ve still got work to do, and we’re nicely on that path.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: When Ontarians hear that their Minister of Health is searching every corner of our health care system to find savings, they want to know that their front-line health services that they depend on will be protected. And when the minister makes comments about not being able to provide home care or mental health, the concern turns to fear.

In the coming weeks, will Ontarians be learning about promises that the government made but will now be broken?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It’s unfortunate that the member opposite is taking this quote out of context. What I said was, because the federal government has cut their funding to the province, that will create real pressures for us here in Ontario. We are committed to continuing our progress on mental health and on care at home, but if the federal government does not accept its responsibility and withdraws funding from Ontario, that creates real problems for us. So I would ask the member opposite to join us in our fight with Ottawa. Perhaps she could speak to her federal colleagues to raise this issue, and to stand up for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ontarians understand better than anyone that in tough economic times every health care dollar must be spent carefully and wisely. That is why the government’s choice to encourage such things as private schemes in health care, cuts to nursing services or their refusal to cap CEO salaries makes no sense to them.

Will the minister come clean with Ontarians about whether her comments are actually warning signs of the budget to come?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me underline that we are implementing our action plan for health care. It means more care for people in their own homes. It means better supports for people facing mental health challenges. Could we move more quickly with federal support? Absolutely. Am I signalling any cutbacks? No, I am not. You can rest assured.

I want to also underline that 20,500 more nurses are working today than 10 years ago. Let me repeat that: 20,500 more nurses are working now than 10 years ago, 4,000 more this year than last year. We are shifting. We are not cutting.

1100

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Acting Premier. It’s an accepted fact in Ontario today that the Green Energy Act has been an abysmal failure. But don’t take my word for it. Take the 81 municipalities that have declared themselves not willing hosts; or the Auditor General, who said that for every job the Green Energy Act creates, four are lost; or the energy minister himself, who said that he spent \$20 billion to produce 1.1% of power.

But the final nail in the coffin comes today as we do not meet our WTO obligations for international law because of your government’s domestic content rules and your generous subsidies. We will not meet international law obligations today, Speaker, even though they have known about it for four years. They have been told to correct it in the last year.

We want to know on this side—enough is enough—will the minister cut our losses with this Green Energy Act and finally repeal it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have already taken the preliminary steps to ensure that Ontario is in compliance with the WTO ruling. If passed, Bill 153 would complete that process and would save Ontario ratepayers \$1.9 billion.

I think it’s important that we take a look at what the PC energy plan is. It’s a very, very frightening plan: \$35 billion would go back to ratepayers under this plan. It would add a massive cost to energy bills—\$35 billion—cost Ontario jobs and drive away potential investment. They want to cancel \$20-billion worth of unconnected clean energy projects, putting ratepayers on the hook for cancellation costs. That’s \$20 billion. Another \$15 billion they want to spend on new nuclear that we don’t need and that will send rates sky high. I think they need to look again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate that the Acting Premier isn’t abreast of the file that she’s carrying today on behalf of the energy minister, but I’m wondering: Does

she want to create a trade war in Ontario that is going to create more job losses in our province and come at a significant disadvantage to Ontario commodities?

I also wonder if the Deputy Premier is excited about damaging Canada's international reputation with the World Trade Organization. As I stated, the government has known for four years that they were breaking international law. They have known for a year now that they had to redress this and they had to become compliant by March 24, 2014, which is today. So if the compelling evidence of job losses, municipal unrest and their plan just not working doesn't influence them to do the right thing and cut the Green Energy Act loose, then perhaps complying with international law will do that.

I'll ask again: Will the Liberals do the right thing? Will they break with the Green Energy Act? Will they repeal it—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I believe the member opposite already knows, but I need to remind her, that the domestic requirements in the FIT program were always intended to be temporary while our Ontario industry was established. Now I'm very pleased that Ontario's clean energy manufacturing sector is best in class. We're able to compete on a global level, and I'm seeing that happening in my own community in London.

She should also know, if she doesn't already, that at least 85% of Ontario's domestic clean energy jobs will not be impacted by the reduction of domestic content rules. What these changes do is, they continue our government's commitment to clean, affordable energy, in stark contrast to the PC plan. I'll quote the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. He had this to say last January: "We've been clear that we will not be going ahead with however many projects are left.... clearly there will be a cost associated with that...."

"I guess we're not going to know the entire extent"—unless—"we form government...."

Speaker, it's reckless. It's ridiculous.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Acting Premier: On this side of the House, we've been clear on the sort of changes that we need to see. We can start by fixing the mess in our electricity system.

US jurisdictions are literally taking our electricity at a third of the cost that we pay to generate it and using the subsidy to lure our manufacturing to the United States. To add insult to injury, municipalities in upstate New York are now targeting business in Ontario with a promise of lower electricity rates.

Why is the Acting Premier defending the same McGuinty Liberal status quo that's driving up electricity prices and driving business out of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Just as an aside, Speaker, last year our exporting of electricity actually reduced costs to consumers by \$300 million. The NDP wants to put us out of that business; that is a reckless approach.

We are, though, very concerned about hydro costs for small businesses. This is a serious issue and it's one we're taking seriously and appropriately. We are saving businesses money on hydro bills.

As of 2013, under the industrial electricity incentive, eligible companies qualify for electricity rates that are among the lowest in North America. In exchange for creating new jobs and bringing new investment to the province, the industrial conservation initiative is helping large consumers save on costs by incenting them to shift their electricity consumption to off-peak hours. Speaker, it's working.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I could go on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ontarians paid \$1 billion for that \$300 million worth of electricity we sold.

Families and businesses across Ontario have been saying that skyrocketing hydro bills are making it harder than ever to meet their budget and making it harder for Ontario businesses to grow.

We've put forward a practical solution. Manitoba and Quebec sell their electricity into the same US markets as we do for 50% more. That's because they cut out the middle man and sign long-term contracts that get the best export price.

The Acting Premier and her energy minister are defending a status quo that is sending discount power to the United States while our bills are expected to go up another 40%. Does the Acting Premier see a problem with this, or does she think things are perfectly fine?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, of course our concern for people who are paying high energy prices is real, because their problems are real, and that's why we've taken action to reduce the price.

The NDP has one plank and one plank only that I've been able to find on their energy plan, and that's \$100 off. The National Post said that that proposal "veers straight into crazy talk." It shows that the NDP does not have a realistic plan. When it comes to exports, the National Post says, "Those who claim that Ontario subsidizes electricity exports fail to understand both basic economics and how the Ontario electricity sector actually works."

We agree that this is a challenge for people. We know that; we hear that; we feel it. We have a plan to address it. The NDP simply does not.

BLOOD DONATION

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Ontarians all remember the tainted blood scandals of the 1980s. About 30,000 Canadians were infected with HIV- and hepatitis C-tainted blood and blood products. Thousands also died.

Since then, maintaining the integrity of our blood system has been of utmost importance to all Canadians. That system is built around voluntary donations, and yet a private, for-profit company is setting up clinics in Ontario where people will be paid for donating blood plasma.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can she please inform the House of what she's doing to address this threat to our blood system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks to the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for this important, very timely question. I know many Ontarians are deeply concerned that a private, for-profit company plans to pay blood plasma donors and sell that plasma to an international market.

I wrote to the federal Minister of Health a year ago to express those concerns, and unfortunately, Health Canada has been unwilling to take leadership on this issue, so our government is. As a first step, we've enacted regulatory changes that would prohibit any licensed lab or specimen collection centre from paying for blood or plasma donations.

1110

Last week, I introduced legislation that would, if passed, go a step further by making it an offence to offer to pay donors for blood or for individuals to accept payment. This is an important piece of legislation, Speaker. I understand the members on both sides support it. I really am calling on both parties to commit to passing this legislation as soon as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you to the minister. I'm pleased to hear that our government is addressing this serious health issue. However, media reports indicate that one of the clinics opened up last week and has been accepting donors. Not only does this action undermine Ontarians' confidence in the integrity of our national blood and blood product system, it also poses a real health risk to the system.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can she please also inform the House how she plans to stop this clinic from paying donors for blood plasma?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have been very clear with the operators of this clinic from day one that what they proposed is unacceptable and that they would require a licence to operate in Ontario. I did not, I would not, I will not approve a licence for any lab or clinic that would undermine our voluntary blood donor system. The operators opened their clinic anyway.

Last week, we sent in observers to monitor the clinic's activities. Based on what they found, we have investigated an inspection of the facility. If the company chooses to undertake activities governed by the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act without a licence, I will take every action necessary to ensure they comply with the law. To ensure that paid donations do not undermine our voluntary donation system, we must pass Bill 178 as quickly as possible. Again, I'm calling on all members: Please do not hold up this bill.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, you will know that London and area have been hard hit with recent plant closings announced at Heinz, Kellogg's, Worthington Cylinders and Westcast Industries. In fact, a recent Ivey School of Business report says that London has lost one third of its manufacturing jobs in the last eight years.

However, despite the ongoing job losses, we also know that London police wage hikes have outpaced inflation by 32% over the past decade and two thirds of London's professional firefighters are now making more than \$100,000 per year.

Deputy Premier, with literally thousands and thousands of jobs being lost in the city of London, why do you think these pay increases for police and firefighters are sustainable for taxpayers who pay the bills?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I really want to speak to the economic situation in southwestern Ontario that the member opposite referred to, and I tell you, I have had the great pleasure of attending events where new investors are coming to southwestern Ontario, hiring people who otherwise would not have had that opportunity. This is happening through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund which, shockingly, the member opposite voted against. These are investments that are making a difference.

I will refer the supplementary, Speaker, but I do want an answer from the member opposite: Why didn't you support your own community? Why didn't you support businesses in your own riding to create the jobs we so desperately need?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, that was quite an answer, but back to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, only about half of the working-age population in the city of London even has a full-time job, yet London's police and fire departments continue to add more and more employees to the list of those earning over \$100,000 per year. London's sunshine list shows 239 London professional firefighters are now making over \$100,000 per year. That's more than double the number a year ago.

This is unsustainable. There are hundreds of public sector employees in the city of London who are now making over \$100,000 per year, including 107 different city hall managers, 192 police officers and 239 firefighters.

Deputy Premier, with so many London residents currently out of work, will your government answer our PC call and immediately implement an across-the-board two-year public sector wage freeze and fix Ontario's broken arbitration system?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I don't know what the member opposite is referring to, but we on this side of the House are grateful for the work that our first responders do every single day. We are thankful to our police officers. We are thankful to our firefighters. We are thankful to our paramedics and to every single public servant who continues to serve our hard-working Ontarians.

Speaker, this is coming from a party that wants to fire teachers, that wants to fire nurses in the future, just like they have done in the past, under the government of Mike Harris. We reject and refuse that proposition.

We also reject the proposition of right-to-work-for-less types of policies that are going to drive wages down and that are going to result in a loss of benefits for hard-working Ontarians and a loss of jobs. That is not the direction we want to go in Ontario, and we refuse that notion.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan/Parapan American Games.

Speaker, the first casualty of Pan Am TO2015 was Ian Troop, CEO, who got an extraordinary severance. Now we have the firing of two more TO2015 executives, presumably with yet another set of fat-cat severances. These recent firings expose the dangerous instability at TO2015.

With such extraordinary instability at the helm of the TO2015 Parapan Games, how can Ontarians have the assurance that we will be ready and on budget for the games?

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, all the capital costs and also the capital for the Pan Am Games are on budget, under budget—and on time.

I just want to make sure the member opposite knows this is a change in the management team at TO2015. The decision was made by the CEO, Mr. Rafi. The organizing committee's mandate is to ensure an effective and efficient games delivery. I am confident in Mr. Rafi's decisions to streamline the organization as he sees fit.

To date, the committee has been able to bring in all capital projects on budget. They are all going to be completed well before the games next year. Their performance so far has been great.

I look forward to more updates on the games' progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: I hear they want to aspire, but with answers like that, you might expire.

Ontarians are quite concerned about the one degree of separation between the board, the cabinet minister and the new CEO of TO2015. Now the appointment of Neala Barton, yet another well-known, connected Liberal insider, is drawing a lot more concern. Couple these disturbing connections with their possible sweetheart severance deals, with the serious concerns about rising security costs and the lack of transportation plans, and it's no wonder Ontarians are worried.

Speaker, will this minister finally clear up the murky mess that bubbles to the surface almost weekly at TO2015, or will this chaos continue?

Hon. Michael Chan: The member opposite talked about the management of the games. Let's talk about the management of the games, Speaker. The management of the organizing committee has most recently found savings of \$49 million. The operating budget now decreased from \$1.441 billion to \$1.392 billion. The management of the games is effective and cost-saving.

I am confident that Mr. Rafi's decision is for the good of TO2015 and the games.

Again, all the members opposite are interested in is tearing down the games in any way possible. They do not want the games to come to Toronto. They do not want the games to come to Ontario. They do not want our athletes to live their dream to compete in the games. They can continue to badmouth the games, but we are preparing for the best games ever.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Transportation.

Recently, I introduced Bill 116, the Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy Act. This was legislation dedicated in honour of a resident who was killed by a distracted driver.

In recent years, our government introduced distracted driving laws to keep drivers safe. However, distracted driving is still a major issue on our roads.

1120

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to see the Minister of Transportation introduce stricter laws last week with Bill 173. Through you to the Minister: Can you please explain the enhancement to distracted driving laws that you introduced in Bill 173?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As a matter of fact, the bill that was introduced last week was really the work of the member for Scarborough—Rouge River. I'll talk about this a little later. It was one of four private members' bills that found expression in this. I want to thank him for his leadership and his concern for public safety, because all Ontarians are benefiting from this legislation, which we hope will see passage in the House soon.

This law will allow justices to increase fines. We're setting a minimum of \$300 to a maximum of \$1,000, as the member asked for. He also lobbied very heavily that demerit points should be increased. As of matter of fact, the MPP for Scarborough—Rouge River suggested that three demerit points, as with impaired driving, should also be—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm happy to report to him that his effort has been successful and those will be the actions taken by the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I know for a fact that most Ontarians are

supportive of the measures to make roads safer for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers alike. Yet we still see way too many drivers taking risks and still using hand-held devices while driving.

I'd like the minister to speak to what other changes are included in Bill 173 that will aim to keep drivers, cyclists and pedestrians safe, and also why we should all work together to get this piece of legislation passed as soon as possible.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Well, the reasons are pretty significant. Distracted driving now exceeds drunken driving as the leading cause of accidents in Ontario. Just this past year, we have seen 78 deaths from distracted driving. That compares with 57 deaths from impaired driving and 44 deaths from speeding—almost twice as many as from speeding. This has become the biggest serious killer of people on our roads.

But we need passage of this bill. We tried to do it. The other measures actually reflect the work of other members. I want to do want to just again thank the member for Simcoe North, who did the “move and pull over” to end fatalities and make the roads safer; the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka on shoulders and cycling; and the member for Parkdale—High Park for the one-metre rule. I think this is our bill as a House and I hope it will pass—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for Minister of Transportation as well. Minister, during the break you visited my riding and met with a delegation in the county of Renfrew to discuss the four-laning of Highway 17 through to Renfrew. The implication you made coming out of that meeting was that somehow this project is being held up because of a lack of support from opposition and from myself as the local representative.

Minister, I've been committed to this project since you were still the mayor of Winnipeg. Successive transportation ministers have complimented me on my advocacy. In fact, you did so yourself last fall in a meeting with county officials and myself.

Minister, I say it's a priority. You say it's a priority. Why don't you exercise the power that you have, stop passing the buck and ensure that this is in the next five-year transportation plan? Will you do it?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: In fact, I did commend the member for his advocacy when I was in his constituency. What I said was this: The first phase of this project, which just opened in November 2012 all the way to Arnprior, has shown our commitment. I know the member advocated for it as well. That was \$75 million that this government committed to twinning that highway.

What I was asking was whether the member would join myself and other members along the 17 or the 400 highways, because the federal government's commitment for the entire province of Ontario next year—not just for

highways but for schools, water and everything—is only \$73 million, Mr. Speaker. As you know, our government's investment in the 417 was \$75 million. That's \$2 million more from this government for that one project that the government of Canada will spend in this entire province next year. I was looking for his leadership in getting Ms. Gallant and others to get the federal government to match, so we can complete this project sooner.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, you always seem to have someone else to blame. One minute it's us, the opposition; the next minute, it's the federal government. As far as the federal government is concerned, that would be helpful. However, you don't seem to need their help in implementing a pension plan that is going to take tens of billions of dollars out of our economy each and every year. As far as the opposition is concerned, you seem to think that we're the ones—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Finance, come to order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —that control the decision on whether this moves forward or not. You didn't—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Finance.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —consult us with your eHealth scandal—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In case he didn't hear me while he was yelling, the Minister of Finance will come to order.

Finish, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You didn't consult us with your eHealth scandal. You didn't consult us when you implemented the HST. You didn't consult us about the \$1-billion power plant cancellation project.

If you want my commitment, it has been there for 10 years. Here it is once again: I'm absolutely, totally committed to this. Are you? Because as Mr. Firestone says, this is where the rubber meets the road.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: What I was trying to invite was a partnership with the member of the opposition to try and get Ms. Gallant to the table—his federal member.

I'm going to say this very slowly so I'm understood. This government, the government of Kathleen Wynne, has spent \$75 million already twinning that highway to Arnprior. We are working to fund it all the way to Renfrew and eventually to Pembroke. We spend \$3 billion a year on highways. We're not making excuses. When the member opposite was in government, their entire budget for everything was \$1.4 billion. Our entire budget for everything is \$14 billion.

Next year, the federal government will only spend \$73 million for water, sewers, schools, roads and highways.

That will not even extend the highway to Renfrew. We need them to be serious partners; they are not.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Tourism. Minister, last week I raised a very distressing issue in the Legislature. The biggest jazz festival in the entire province learned that it did not qualify for a Celebrate Ontario grant for this year, 2014. Lido Chilleli of the Beaches Jazz Festival said that without this money—which they have received, by the way, for the last seven years—drastic musical cuts will have to be made. Both the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development assured me that they would look into this wrong-headed decision. My question to you, Minister: Will the minister do the right thing and reverse the devastating cut to the Beaches Jazz Festival funding?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. The member knows that last week I actually walked across the floor and told him that I have outreached to the organization regarding this particular funding. The program Celebrate Ontario is a competitive program, and the funding is exhausted, but we do have other programs in my ministry. That's what we are prepared to talk to the organization about, so that we can come up with ways and means to help them. I have advised the member opposite. I'm surprised that he brought up the question today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: I brought the question up because if they don't know what funding they have by the end of this month, they're going to have to cancel three of the four stages. That's why I'm asking today.

The Beaches Jazz Festival is open and accessible to everyone. It is free to the public. It supports young and emerging musical talent, and it is world-renowned.

OVO Fest, which is taking place in Toronto on August 3 and 4, reportedly sold \$9 million worth of tickets in 48 hours, but your ministry gave them \$300,000. Even the tiny Markham Jazz Festival in your own riding is receiving the grant. Music festivals across the province are getting help from Celebrate Ontario, but the biggest, the best and free of charge, a showcase for new talent, is receiving nothing from Ontario. Will this minister reverse this direction, support the Beaches Jazz Festival and do it today before the event is cancelled?

1130

Interjection: There are a lot of festivals across the province.

Hon. Michael Chan: You're right. Thank you very much for the question. I just heard my honourable colleague say there are a lot of festivals and events happening every year in Ontario, and our Celebrate Ontario program is a highly competitive program. This year we received 441 applications requesting more than \$34 million in funding. As you know, Speaker, the funding available is about \$20 million.

Of the 229 successful applicants, 129—more than half—were in both opposition and third party ridings. To say the program plays favourites is simply ridiculous. It's time for the member opposite to stop playing politics with Ontario's wonderful festivals and events; he insults all the applicants and the organizations.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As a member from Ottawa, I understand the importance of mining, not just for the north but for the entire province. In 2013, the value of mineral production in Ontario was \$9.8 billion, up from \$6.3 billion in 2009. This industry has an economic impact on the entire province. That is an increase of over 50%—I think 57%—in only four years.

I'm proud of our government's success in helping to foster this important industry. For instance, Ontario is among the top 10 mineral investment jurisdictions in the world. As a result, 24 new mines have opened here over the last 10 years; that's more than anywhere else in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Northern Development and Mines please educate this House on any new Ontario mine openings?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I thank the member for the question. He's certainly right; the mining industry has enormous benefits for the entire province, certainly not just northern Ontario. When a new mine opens, it has an immensely positive impact on the regional economy, and every community surrounding it shares in those benefits.

That's why, certainly, Premier Wynne and I were so pleased to be up in Greater Sudbury on February 21 at the official opening of the Totten mine, Vale's first new mine in the Sudbury basin in over 40 years. We were joined by a number of other members of the Legislature as well because it's such a huge event. The project itself created over 500 construction jobs, and now is employing over 200 area residents. This is a great story and really a positive piece of news.

It's worth talking about the safety record as well, may I say, of this mine. During construction it was exemplary, achieving over one million person hours without a lost-time injury. Just a great project, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I would like to thank the minister for that update, and he is right: Totten's employment and safety record is impressive. I'm very pleased to hear about both the economic benefit and the safety record of this new Vale mine.

I note that this government and the minister are also concerned with community engagement and environmental effects of the mining industry. That is why our government has modernized our legislation so that First Nations consultation is one of the first steps in the mining sequence.

Since the beginning of the Abandoned Mines Rehabilitation Program, Ontario has undertaken rehabilitation of 80 mines, demonstrating our commitment to environmental stewardship.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: How are community engagement and environmental protections ensured in the operations of the new mines in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Again, I thank the member for Ottawa–Orléans for the question. It really is an example of how the mining industry has changed so immensely. That mine is demonstrating leadership in both community engagement and environmental stewardship. They've utilized some of the best technology automation and environmental management in the mining industry. Totten mine is one of the most environmentally friendly mines in the province.

I want to congratulate Vale, obviously, but also Chief Paul Eshkakogan, I believe is how you pronounce it, from the Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nations for signing an impact benefit agreement. This is, again, proactive and a beneficial type of community engagement very much supporting the approach taken by our government when we modernized the Mining Act. First Nations and aboriginal consultation is one of the first steps in the mining sequence. This is a tremendous project with great economic and social benefits, and one we should all be very proud of.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, today we have in the member's gallery a young hairstylist by the name of Kailin Ambrose. Kailin finished her hairstylist apprenticeship and she has a loyal group of customers who believe she is an excellent hairstylist. Repeatedly, she has tried unsuccessfully to pass the written exam. She has tried the exam six times and has spent over \$800, without success. She is now classified as a journeyperson candidate.

On April 8, the first anniversary of your boondoggle Ontario College of Trades, her time is up. She either passes the exam or, according to a letter signed by your five directors—and I have a copy right here—she no longer can practise hairdressing. In other words, she's out of work.

There are another 4,300 apprenticeship candidates like Kailin, according to the Ontario College of Trades website. Minister, are you prepared to see this tragedy happen to so many people just because they have trouble passing a written exam? Minister, let's bring some common sense to this place. Tell Kailin that she can continue working and building a career for herself—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, through you to the hairstylists who are here today: Welcome to Queen's Park. Thank you for being here. I'm delighted you're here, because it gives me an opportunity, through the Speaker, to address this issue with you and compare our approach to the approach opposite.

We believe in you as skilled tradespeople who are more than capable of making decisions for yourselves. The decisions governing your sector ought not to be made by politicians, like they want to do, but be made by the sector itself, by tradespeople in a forum of self-government.

We believe that hairdressers, hairstylists and all tradespeople deserve to be protected. They've gone to school. They've gone through apprenticeships. They deserve to have their jobs protected from the underground economy, which is what the College of Trades does.

That party over there does not believe in that. We'll continue to stand up for skilled tradespeople in this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Isn't that some answer? Isn't that pathetic? With Kailin today are other hairstylists and business people who have started the Ontario Hairstylists Association. They have also started the Cut the Salon Tax campaign. Every hair salon in Ontario is going to hear about Cut the Salon Tax. You can be sure that's going to happen, because they're going to get to you through this Ontario College of Trades.

The one thing we've got going for us is that we're not puppets here on this side of the House for Pat Dillon and the Working Families Coalition, like that crew over there. We can't take this any longer. The people of Ontario deserve better than people like that representing them on cabinet. I will never be a puppet for a Pat Dillon type of person. You are. Explain yourself, why you're not a Pat Dillon puppet.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: What we're going to do is continue to work with tradespeople across this province to ensure that they can have their own voice, so decisions that impact their trades are not made in smoky back-rooms—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. The member from Simcoe North asked the question, and I think you want to hear the answer. If you don't want to hear the answer—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't want anyone speaking while I'm speaking.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oakville, I don't need your support.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Halton, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The difference between us and them is that we believe skilled tradespeople in this province—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You're bought and paid for.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Simcoe North will withdraw.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Absolutely not. I will never withdraw for a comment like that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North will withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North is named.

Mr. Dunlop was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. While there was noise, the member from Simcoe North was named.

You have 10 seconds.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to stand up for tradespeople across this province. We're going to continue to ensure that those hard-working people go through apprenticeships and that they're going to be protected from the underground economy. We're going to stand up for consumers. We believe that they can govern themselves—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Cameron Laflamme is a young man with autism who lives in Hamilton with his parents, Marilyn and Serge. He attends an excellent high school program that meets his needs and allows his parents to work. But at the end of June, Cameron will be aged out of school. He could attend a day program, but his family barely receives one third of the cost of this program.

The family doesn't need a spot on the Passport funding wait-list; they need increased support. Will the minister commit to providing Cameron with the support he needs before the end of the school year?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: As the member opposite surely knows, I am not in a position, personally or legally, to get into answering specific questions about specific cases. I would suggest to the member opposite that if she would like to sit down with me and talk about her situation, or with my parliamentary assistant—I don't know if this is the same situation you were talking about—we'd be delighted to have that conversation and to see not only what might be provided, but also to bring the member up to speed in terms of how she accesses services on behalf of her constituents.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Back to the minister: No, Minister, it's not the same case. It's a different case, as there is a different case happening every day.

Better supports for persons with disabilities and their families are desperately needed. Waiting lists are not the answer. No one can put their life on hold while they're waiting for a decision from this ministry. Every young

person will be aged out of school. Developmental services knows exactly when this is going to happen, and they should be prepared. Yet this transition continues to occur and throws families into turmoil.

Speaker, to the minister: Instead of properly supporting persons with developmental disabilities as their needs change, why does this government choose to leave Ontario families in the lurch and force them to fight for more support?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I don't disagree with much of what the member opposite has said. We all have a responsibility in this place to put in place supports for those in our developmental services sector and their families who are having challenges.

The member opposite did speak with me in passing about a specific case last week, which I assured her we would work on. She hasn't spoken to me about this, unfortunately, until just now. If she would like to do that, I would be pleased to offer whatever help I can.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I ask all the members of the House to join me in welcoming my special guest today, Ms. Jeeti Singh, who is a businesswoman and a philanthropist from the city of Mississauga. Please join me in welcoming her.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, it's my pleasure and privilege to introduce some very special people. I would like, on behalf of our page Zohaib Aslam, to introduce his mom, Naila Qazi. Now this is especially important, because they are from Mississauga and Mrs. Qazi has had a daughter, Sherry, who has also served here as page. So let's definitely welcome the mother of not one, but two pages.

And while I have the floor, it is also my pleasure to reintroduce one of our legislative interns, Matthew Lo from Ohio, who has come back to once again to watch the genteel behaviour here on the floor of the Ontario Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: One of the most common problems I hear about from my constituents is their difficulty in finding a family physician. Last week in the Legislature, the Minister of Health stated that "We now have 5,000 more doctors working in Ontario than just a decade ago," and that "doctors are going where they're needed...." Well, Speaker, that's not the reality of what we see in Perth-Wellington. Many times I have spoken

up for my constituents who do not have a family doctor. I have written letters to the Minister of Health, I have raised it in the House and I have met with local doctors, health care professionals and recruiters.

In response to these concerns the minister has painted a rosy picture, listing various programs and ratios of practising physicians to residents. For those who are without a family doctor and have been waiting on the government's Health Care Connect list for over a year, the minister's response is of little consolation. Constituents who have been forced to wait in the emergency room to have prescriptions filled or to speak with a physician about a routine issue have told me that there are simply not enough doctors accepting patients to meet our local demand. I wrote to the minister last week, pushing her to come through for my constituents without a family doctor. I look forward to her prompt reply.

EVENTS IN TECUMSEH

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Festivals and Events Ontario came up with a new award. It's called Best Festival City. I'm so proud that the town of Tecumseh has won the inaugural recognition for communities with fewer than 200,000 people. Our Tecumseh Corn Festival and our BIA Art of Eating festival put us to the top of the list. The award salutes the many hours of time that our volunteers put in to provide a quality festival experience for residents and visitors.

I wish to salute the countless volunteers and their organizing committees. These community champions include Deputy Mayor Cheryl Hardcastle, Councillor Joe Bachetti and BIA Chair Susan Tope. The award recognizes the "best in community leadership and festival and event partnerships". Congratulations to each and every member of town council, and indeed every town employee, who played a role in making these events the great success that they've come to be. And it wouldn't be possible without the support of a motivated business community.

Way to go, Tecumseh, on this best festival award, and to the larger population winner, the city of Ottawa, kudos on your accomplishments as well.

I was presented, on Friday, with two great pieces of photography by a young Tecumseh teenager, Jesse Hebert. Jesse was the winner of Kevin O'Leary's Future Dragon Fund contest for his photographic skills. I'm very proud to showcase his work here at Queen's Park and back home in my constituency office.

Thank you, Jesse, and thank you, Speaker, for allowing me the time to brag about the great things going on in the town of Tecumseh.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My absolute pleasure.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to recognize today as Greek Independence Day. Greek independence was

declared March 25, 1821. Commemoration of this date is important for its historical significance. It's also a wonderful opportunity to celebrate Greece's political and cultural contributions to the world. After all, this is the country that gave us democracy and the Olympic Games.

It is also a perfect time to celebrate significant contributions that Greek Canadians have made to Ontario. Ontario has a vibrant Greek community. For example, yesterday there was a great parade on Toronto's Danforth. I was proud to walk alongside Toronto Councillor Mary Fragedakis, Trustee Sam Sotiropoulos, Consul General of Greece Dimitris Azemopoulos, His Eminence Metropolitan Archbishop Sotirios of Toronto, and Andonis Artemakis, president of the Greek Community of Toronto.

Yesterday's parade also brought back many wonderful childhood memories for me. My family immigrated to Canada, and we settled in Toronto-Danforth. As a newcomer to Canada, I remember being fascinated by the Greek cultures on the Danforth, a street with so much cultural and economic significance for our province. It was fun to visit many shops, especially eating my first souvlaki.

I've always felt that cultural diversity is what makes Ontario such a great place to live, play and work.

As we celebrate Greece's proud history, we also celebrate what makes Ontario so great. Zito É Ellas; Zito to Ontario; Zito O Kanadas.

KEMPTVILLE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I rise today to address the concerns which many of my constituents have voiced over the impending closure of Kemptville campus. For decades, young people from my riding of Northumberland-Quinte West have travelled in droves to Kemptville and have brought that expertise back to the family farm. From my own experience working with these graduates, their education was second to none. Despite this, the McGuinty-Wynne government seems to think it's okay to allow Kemptville campus to simply fade into our memories. It's yet another example of the mismanagement of the agricultural file by a part-time minister and further proof that just like her predecessor, Premier Wynne and her cabinet just don't understand rural Ontario.

Just last week, my office received letter after letter from the Kemptville College Alumni board, including board president Ron Burgess, pleading with us to impose a two-year moratorium on this closure so local communities can make a solution. These alumni understand better than anyone the value and importance of maintaining this campus, and they're coming to the PC Party for help because they know we understand rural Ontario.

I stand in the House today to implore the Minister of Agriculture to listen to the Kemptville College Alumni board and the thousands of rural Ontarians across this province who know that we cannot allow this campus to close. If she is not willing to put in full-time hours on the

agricultural file, she should step down as minister and appoint someone who will, because the people of Northumberland—Quinte West and rural Ontario deserve better.

MAPLE SYRUP PRODUCTION

Mr. Michael Mantha: My favourite time of the year is upon us, and it's not hockey playoff season; it's actually maple syrup season. The sap that flows from sugar maples only does so for about six weeks a year.

I want to highlight a local producer: Doug Thompson of Thompson's Maple Products on St. Joseph Island. Thompson and his partners have come up a wireless system that lets producers monitor their lines so they know exactly when and where a leak has sprung. Working closely with Algoma Business Computers, together they formed a company, Tap Track Technologies, and have designed a system to help producers avoid these problems. Thompson was presented with a Leaders in Innovation Award for new technologies.

The first two weeks of April, St. Joseph Island will be hosting their 47th Annual Maple Syrup Festival. The Royal Canadian Legion in Richards Landing will be serving an all-you-can-eat pancake and sausage breakfast. Don't miss it.

I want to encourage everyone to make the trip. Many local businesses and artists will be participating, and it's a great place to pick up local crafts and local baked goods. The children's library will also be hosting a fundraiser, and there will be plenty of used books for sale. So just stop in and grab a look.

In Algoma-Manitoulin, from St. Joseph across the North Shore to Manitoulin, many family farms open their sugar bushes and host adventures for their families to come out and enjoy the area and the many delicious maple syrup treats. Come on out and pan your plates and maybe you will find this gold nugget.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I saw nothing.

1310

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Steven Del Duca: As always, it's always a pleasure for me to rise and update the House regarding some interesting and important events that are happening or taking place in my riding, particularly when they mean there are more examples, like there were this morning, of our government making very important and meaningful investments in my community of Vaughan.

This morning, I was very happy to stand alongside my mayor, Maurizio Bevilacqua, and two members of our council, Sandra Racco and also Marilyn Iafrate, to announce that our government has decided to add significant service to the Barrie GO line.

Specifically, starting on April 5, GO Transit will extend one of the morning and one of the afternoon trains on the Barrie line from 10 to 12 cars. This will add an

impressive 320 more seats per trip. In addition to that, as of June 28, there will also be two new weekday morning trains on the Barrie line from Maple to Union Station. In addition, we are reintroducing the weekend service during the summer months on this line, and we are also adding additional bus routes along the Barrie corridor as well.

Many, many residents in my community rely very much on the Barrie GO line, and I know that they'll be delighted that this government continues to invest significantly in crucial public transit infrastructure, to the tune of more than \$9 billion worth of investments in GO since 2003.

It is, as always, a pleasure for me to update the House on the things that are taking place in my wonderful community of Vaughan.

DISASTER RELIEF

Ms. Laurie Scott: Last spring, my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock was one of the areas in Ontario that were hit the hardest by flooding. This resulted in a state of emergency being declared in parts of the city of Kawartha Lakes and Minden Hills. In particular, the Burnt River, Black River and Gull River were affected, and particularly the town of Minden was the most impacted.

It was heartbreaking to tour the areas and to see the number of residents whose homes and businesses and contents were damaged.

Despite these hardships, neighbours banded together in the weeks and months following the flood to assist one another with the cleanup and to rebuild their communities. In order to receive money from the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program, the communities affected were forced to fundraise. This is something that the people of Toronto did not have to do in the days following the ice storm this winter. Many small communities took on this challenge, hosting bake sales, BBQs, concerts, toonie miles, golf tournaments—whatever it took to raise money. Minden Hills raised a phenomenal \$708,000.

But in the wake of this disaster, I filed a motion that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing undertake a review of the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program to determine how it could better meet the needs of individuals, businesses and small municipalities who were impacted by disaster situations in Ontario.

Local municipalities have reworked their emergency plans and developed better communications plans.

The federal government, in its most recent budget, recognized the importance of developing a national standard of overland flood insurance. This would help correct the bizarre requirement that victims must fundraise before they are eligible to received disaster assistance as, in Ontario—this is the only province that has this precondition.

I know we have had a rough winter, and I just hope that the floods don't come again.

GREENBELT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: We pride ourselves on our people's great capacity to develop areas which provide housing for our families and which drive our economic engine. However, Oakville residents agree that the pace of development must be controlled so that we never lose the great endowment that we have in the greenbelt area in the Golden Horseshoe.

When our party formed government, we recognized the great gift of nature that we had right on our doorstep, and we took action in securing nearly two million acres of green space that we now know as the greenbelt. This was done in spite of opposition by Tim Hudak and the Conservatives, who voted against the greenbelt twice, potentially robbing future generations of the farmlands, the wetlands and the forests that our province has to offer.

Today I stand with the people of the town of Oakville to ask our government to add the area around Fourteen Mile Creek in Oakville. I also ask that the provincially owned lands not be sold to the private sector but be preserved in public ownership instead.

My constituents recognize the value of green space in the region. They have identified these areas as very important for future Ontarians as a place to stand and grow. They know that, based on any analysis that could be brought forward, these lands would make a wonderful addition to the greenbelt, and I support them in that regard.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to congratulate my constituents Charles Stevens, who was elected chair of the Ontario Apple Growers, as well as Cathy McKay, who was elected vice-chair. Charles, along with his wife, Judi, and daughter, Courtney, owns and operates Wilnot Orchards near Newcastle. They have over 80 acres of apples as well as a pick-your-own blueberry operation and the Appleberries Café.

The Stevens family has a long and distinguished history of leadership and innovation in the Durham agricultural industry. Long-time residents would certainly realize that Charles's father and mother, Bob and Jean Stevens, were owners and operators of Glen Rae Dairy.

Ontario Apple Growers' vice-chair, Cathy McKay, owns and operates a farm and orchard near Port Perry with her husband, Marvin. Their Nature's Bounty pick-your-own farm has 20 different varieties of apples on approximately 14,000 trees. The McKays also raise decorative corn, squash and pumpkins, plus a herd of 40 sheep on their farm in the Oak Ridges moraine.

Mr. Speaker, Charles Stevens and Cathy McKay are representatives of the many leaders from the agriculture and agri-business sector who live and grow in Durham region. I urge all members to support local farms and local produce as we look forward to the 2014 growing season. Let's raise a cheer for those who are growing the food that we eat.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements. I would offer another gentle reminder that we always use either the member's title or their riding when making references to elected members in the House. I would thank you and urge you to co-operate with that request.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PUBLIC SECTOR AND MPP
ACCOUNTABILITY
AND TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2014LOI DE 2014 SUR
LA RESPONSABILISATION
ET LA TRANSPARENCE DU SECTEUR
PUBLIC ET DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr. Milloy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 179, An Act to promote public sector and MPP accountability and transparency by enacting the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014 and amending various Acts / Projet de loi 179, Loi visant à promouvoir la responsabilisation et la transparence du secteur public et des députés par l'édiction de la Loi de 2014 sur la rémunération des cadres du secteur parapublic et la modification de diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Hon. John Milloy: During ministerial statements, Mr. Speaker.

MOTIONS

SELECT COMMITTEE ON
DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Select Committee on Developmental Services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated October 3, 2013, the Select Committee on Developmental Services shall present its final report no later than June 5, 2014.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated October 3, 2013, the Select Committee on Developmental Services shall present—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let me try that again. Mr. Milloy moves that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated October 3, 2013, the Select Committee on Developmental Services shall present its final report no later than June 5, 2014. Agreed? Agreed. The motion carries.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the membership of the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

1320

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that the following change be made to the membership of the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills: Ms. Fife replaces Mr. Vanthof.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Agreed? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 2 and 5 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Hon. John Milloy: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak about a piece of legislation that was just introduced several moments ago.

Since day one, our government has made openness and transparency a priority. As part of our Open Government plan, we're taking further action to strengthen political accountability and make the business of government more transparent.

The proposed Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014, would, if passed, build on the Premier's commitment to lead the most open and transparent government in the country. The proposed bill, if passed, would further strengthen political accountability, open up the business of government and increase third-party oversight.

From legislating the public disclosure of expenses of our elected members to directly controlling executive pay in the broader public sector, to further strengthening our record-keeping obligations, to enhancing accountability in classified agencies and increasing oversight in broader public sector organizations, our government is serious about our commitment to open government.

I'm proud to stand in the House today to introduce a package of far-reaching measures that would, if passed, set a high standard for accountability and transparency in Ontario.

The proposed measures in this bill target three key areas: political accountability, oversight in the broader public sector, and transparency in classified agencies and the broader public sector.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would build on a number of measures our government has already taken, including the introduction of the Public Sector Expenses Review Act in 2009, which gives the Integrity Commissioner authority to review expense claims of Ontario's 17 largest classified agencies and four hydro organizations, and the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, introduced in 2010, which sets out accountability measures for many broader public sector organizations.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario has a strong accountability framework in place for its elected members and public servants, and today we propose to set the bar higher. The proposed Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014, would, if passed, make it mandatory for cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants, opposition leaders and their staff to post their expense information online.

Currently, expense reporting is done on a voluntary basis. The Premier, our cabinet and staff have been complying with that spirit of transparency since April 1, 2010. By making this a legislative requirement, we would ensure the opposition would finally follow our lead.

This legislation, if passed, would require the Speaker to post online information respecting payments to all MPPs for expenses concerning out-of-riding travel, related hotel expenses, meals and hospitality expenses.

I would like to take this opportunity, if I may, Mr. Speaker, to acknowledge the member from Ottawa South, who is here beside me today, who has been championing transparency with respect to member expenses since he arrived at Queen's Park last summer, and whose private member's bill served as a blueprint for the measures that we're introducing today.

I have also written to my counterparts in the opposition to seek their support in posting online the annual disclosure of MPP expenses, which is compiled and prepared by the Legislative Assembly.

Government MPPs are leading by example by voluntarily posting those expenses online on their individual websites. I strongly encourage my colleagues in the opposition to follow our lead. I think we can all agree, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Ontario deserve clear and easy access to the expenses of their elected representatives.

Our government takes our record-keeping obligations seriously. The Information and Privacy Commissioner has credited our government for implementing important record-keeping reforms and staff training. To date, we have acted on all of her non-legislative recommendations. We're taking further action in this legislation, which would, if passed, implement three key legislative amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, known as FIPPA, and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, known as MFIPPA.

The proposed bill would require all institutions subject to FIPPA and MFIPPA to securely retain records, prohibit the wilful destruction of records with the intent to deny access, and introduce a fine of up to \$5,000 for the wilful destruction of records. The proposed bill would also empower the Integrity Commissioner to selectively review the expenses of executives in designated public bodies.

If passed, this legislation would be accompanied by changes to regulations made under the Public Sector Expense Review Act, 2009, so that all 197 classified agencies would be subject to the act. This would mean that the Integrity Commissioner would have the expanded scope to conduct expense reviews on all 197 classified agencies on a selected basis, in contrast to the current 17 classified agencies. The four hydro entities would continue to be covered.

Mr. Speaker, lobbying is an essential part of democracy, and we understand the important role that transparency plays in letting the people of Ontario know who is communicating with their government and for what purpose. We know that strengthening accountability in lobbying would help improve the information provided to the public, lobbyists and government.

If passed, this proposed bill would strengthen the Lobbyists Registration Act by providing the Integrity Commissioner with investigative powers, including the ability to prohibit individuals from lobbying for up to two years in the event of non-compliance. Enforcement provisions would include stiffer fines of up to \$100,000.

It's important to have a variety of expert perspectives and oversight, and our government is committed to strengthening that. If passed, the proposed bill would extend the Ontario Ombudsman's role to include municipalities, school boards and universities. For municipalities, the Ontario Ombudsman would also be permitted to investigate requests from individuals regarding meetings of the municipalities that were closed to the public after an investigation has been conducted by a municipally appointed meeting investigator.

We are also proposing to appoint a new patient ombudsman to help people resolve complaints against public hospitals, long-term-care homes, and community care access centres. The patient ombudsman would have powers to investigate and make public reports like the Ontario Ombudsman, but would be dedicated to the health sector.

Furthermore, we are proposing to give the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth new investigative

powers similar to those of the Ontario Ombudsman. The advocate would be able to investigate matters relating to children and youth involved in the child protection system, while putting the best interests of children and youth first.

Finally, the 2013 fall economic statement committed to controlling compensation for senior executives in the broader public sector, and today we are making good on that promise. Our government has the right plan to control executive compensation in the broader public sector. This legislation, if passed, would authorize the government to directly control the compensation of senior executives in the BPS by establishing compensation frameworks.

The provisions in this bill would give the government the right to access all compensation-related information, like contracts, so we can set compensation frameworks, including hard caps.

The proposed legislation also includes important enforcement and compliance measures. For instance, any elements of compensation in the new contracts that are found to be in excess of the framework would be deemed ineligible. Heads of organizations would be required to submit attestations confirming they are in compliance with the compensation frameworks.

1330

Our government would also have the ability to audit any of these organizations to ensure that they are in compliance with these frameworks. Furthermore, employers would be required to repay any amount in excess of the amounts set out in the compensation framework while minimizing the impact on its services to the public.

Offence provisions have been created to address wilful noncompliance with attestation or audit requirements with fines on conviction of up to \$5,000.

I'm very proud of the bill I'm presenting today, because it supports practices that would make our government even more accountable and transparent. These extensive accountability measures represent great strides. These measures, if passed, would help make Ontario one of the most accountable and transparent governments in the country. I urge all my colleagues in the House to support this very important legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: I did have the opportunity to sit in the boardroom and review this matter just a few minutes ago. I guess a couple of things are troubling. One, there appears to be a lot of duplication of work that's already in place. I note we're going to have an ombudsman who's going to review the city ombudsman. At the city of Toronto, the ombudsman's office got to be a very expensive matter. If you look at the history, a resident has a complaint and they usually take it to staff. If they can't get it resolved at staff, they go to their elected official. That fine; that's what they've got them for. If they can't solve it with the elected official, they sometimes go to the mayor in the end. And if they can't solve it there, we now have an ombudsman in the city of

Toronto who is supposed to handle these problems. Now, if you can't solve it there, you can come up to the province's Ombudsman and they'll take a whack at it for you. I just wonder, how many levels of service and bureaucracy are we going to create to handle this job?

I really have concern over the duplication, and I certainly have concern over the cost. I asked what the cost of all this would be, and there was no answer. There was absolutely no answer. No one could give you even a ballpark figure of what this is going to cost. But I know the way bureaucracy works. Once you start it, you can't stop it, and the expense just goes up and up and up.

That's the problem with what has confronted this government for 10 years that they have not been able to handle. They haven't been able to control the costs. That's why our debt has doubled, and that's why our deficit is now close to \$12 billion. That's why, I think, 9% of our revenue costs go towards paying our debt. It's because the people running the government haven't learned to control their own expenditures. This is just another example of it. I'm concerned that we're just going to be putting more taxpayers' dollars that we can't afford into something else. I think all that definitely has to be looked at.

As far as this government and openness and transparency, heaven knows—

Interjection.

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: I heard laughter in the room, I guess, when that was mentioned. But the very reason for all this before us is the fact that, in the past, they haven't been open and transparent. As a matter of fact, there's a police investigation under way right now to find out what in the world they have done. The auditor had to get into the gas plant cancellation matter to see if he could figure out just what it cost us, because they weren't open and transparent enough to tell us. It dragged on for over a year, maybe even two years. So if we need openness and transparency, it's because the government can't control themselves. They can't be open and transparent. Now they are trying to appear like they are by putting in these tougher controls to make it look like that's what they really care about. But the best way to show what they really care about was by their actions, and by their own actions, they haven't been open and transparent. I'm not sure whether they're going to follow the new rules or not. I guess the biggest concern I really have is who is going to have the oversight of this government.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to have this opportunity to respond to the minister and to this bill. We only have five minutes today, but we will get an opportunity, I imagine, hopefully soon, to do a full hour, because we need so much time to talk about these things, as you might imagine.

I do have a different point of view, one that is radically different from the one presented by the Tories on this bill. But I do want to say that I am happy that the Liberals keep on taking many of our ideas while they attack them. It is a fascinating thing that I've got to deal with on a daily basis, because you constantly have ministers and

the Premier attacking the NDP, and then you see our ideas reflected in your bills. And you wonder, "What's going on here?" I've got to tell you, I get tired every now and then. I get tired of bringing the ideas out to you as you whack us each and every time on the very things you put in your bills. It's exhausting; I just wanted to tell you that.

So the first point is—and I won't be able to speak to all these items, because we just don't have enough time—the broader public sector executive compensation act. It's interesting. The New Democrats, as you know, Minister, have been trying to cap salaries of the big fat cats in the civil service in a way that would control the costs, because I've got to tell you, if we can't find a civil servant who is willing to take 425,000 bucks as opposed to a million bucks, I say, "Send them out the door." That's what I say. Yet I can't find one Liberal who will publicly say the same thing. You've got an interesting thing here about the broader public sector executive compensation act, but what it does is, you're going to compile information from sector to sector, ministry to ministry, organization to organization. You're going to take a whole lot of time to compile all this information, and at the end of that—assuming there's an end, because there must be, presumably after the election—then you will put forth some regulations that will deal with the issue of broader public sector executive compensation. God bless. It sounds good that you put it on as the first item of debate, and we'll have more time later on.

The other idea is having to do with Ombudsman oversight. You know, Minister, that this little guy here has been pushing for Ombudsman oversight over so many areas that he should be over, and you guys have been saying, "No, we don't need it. We have oversight. We don't need the poor, tired Ombudsman to have this power over these other bodies, because we have adequate oversight." Do you remember that? Do you remember that?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm very sorry to have to interrupt the member for Trinity-Spadina, but the cacophony in the House means I have to. I would ask the House to come to order, and I'll return to the member for Trinity-Spadina. I'll give you a few extra seconds.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Speaker, for stopping the clock.

You'll recall that each and every time—for the last eight years, I've been putting forth bills. Our leader, when she was but an ordinary MPP, had bills on Ombudsman oversight. My colleague Madame Gélinas has brought forth bills on this very same thing.

Today we have the minister saying, "Okay, we're going to do some of that for you." But why does it take eight years? Why do we have to get beaten up for eight years until you finally say okay?

We have Ombudsman oversight over the university sector, over school boards—something that I've been pushing for a long, long time—and over the municipal governments, and that's all good.

On the other hand, there's absolutely no mention that Fiona Crean, the ombudsman for the city of Toronto, has been doing a great job and that perhaps we might want to look at giving her a little more power to be able to do an even better job—there's no recognition that she's been doing that. We should recognize that Toronto, as the only city that has one, might consider some special attention. We'll talk about that at another time.

The other issues that are not addressed by the Ombudsman are the following: amendments to the “excellent care” act, where they're going to have a separate ombudsman. Do we really need that? It's like saying that the bankers need an ombudsman who comes out of the banking industry, which we have at the federal level. We're going to have an ombudsperson who is going to dedicate his or her time just to health care, when our Ombudsman could do a brilliant job of having that oversight, and we're passing that on.

I'll have more time at the next opportunity.

1340

PETITIONS

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the University of Guelph's Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario's outstanding post-secondary agricultural schools; and

“Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario and the future success of the region's agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

“Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph's short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses.”

I could not agree more with this petition and I'm willing to affix my name to it.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

“Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

“Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

“Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

“Whereas, regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page Calvin to bring it down to the Clerks.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

“Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

“Whereas progressive record keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry, and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

“Whereas there is more to full exploitation of technology than having email;

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

“Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal devices, maximize the many technology offerings and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario ...

“In agreement whereof,” Speaker, I'm certainly supportive, will affix my signature, as I'm sure the opposition will, and send it to you via page Zohaib.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: “Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients

between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their" homes to raise money to fund therapy;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices."

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from Sheila David, the office manager at the MS Centre for Hope in Sudbury, and Brenda Salo from the Beaver Lake Club. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

There is, right now, a difference of 11 cents a litre between two communities 70 kilometres apart in Nickel Belt.

I support this petition and will ask Mustfah to bring it to the Clerk.

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas cystic fibrosis is a multi-system genetic disease primarily affecting the lungs and digestive system;

"Whereas one in every 3,600 children born in Canada has cystic fibrosis, making it the most common fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children and young adults;

"Whereas there is no cure for cystic fibrosis, but the drug Kalydeco is the first medication that has shown success in targeting the underlying genetic cause of cystic fibrosis for patients with the specific G551D mutation;

"Whereas this drug helps improve the function of the defective protein, leading to better lung function, weight gain, and lower sweat chloride levels and access to Kalydeco could lead to a healthier, longer life;

"Whereas Kalydeco has been approved by Health Canada, but the approximately \$300,000 annual cost makes it an unaffordable treatment option for the overwhelming majority of Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care take immediate action to expedite listing Kalydeco on the province's drug formulary so this treatment is available to Ontario families."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: I have another stack of petitions here—actually, 502 names—from across the province.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas people who feel they have been wronged by the actions of children's aid societies are left feeling helpless with nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate children's aid societies."

I couldn't agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to sign my name to it and give it to page Jane to bring to the Clerk.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Toby Barrett: "Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Can-

ada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

1350

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

This is long overdue, Speaker, and I affix my signature along with these other ones.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads ‘that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles’;

“Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

“Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately.”

I wholeheartedly agree and pass it down to Simon.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

“Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

“Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

“Whereas the current policies of the McGuinty/Wynne Liberal government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers.”

I support it and will send it with page Calvin, from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, to the Clerks’ desk.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over the northeast, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario government” brought PET scanning into publicly insured health services “available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

“Whereas” since “October 2009, insured PET scans” are “performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with” Health Sciences North, “its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through” Health Sciences North “thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario.”

We’ve waited a long time, Mr. Speaker. I will ask Milana to bring it to the Clerk.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the University of Guelph’s Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario’s outstanding post-secondary agricultural schools; and

“Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario and the future success of the region’s agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

“Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the

University of Guelph's short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Jane.

FIREFIGHTERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that at comes from firefighters in and around the city of Greater Sudbury.

"Whereas firefighters are routinely exposed to burning chemicals and other toxins in the course of protecting the lives and property of fellow citizens; and

"Whereas even with the best respiratory practices and protective equipment, exposures will continue to occur due to absorption through the skin once a firefighter has become soaked during fire suppression activities; and

"Whereas epidemiological, medical and scientific studies conclusively demonstrate an increased rate of diseases such as cancer in firefighters versus the general population;"

They petition "the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: "Amend the regulations of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act (WSIA), 1997 to include cancer of the lungs, breasts, testicles, prostate, skin and multiple myeloma in presumptive legislation for occupational diseases related to firefighting."

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask Kathryn to bring it to the Clerk.

SENIOR CITIZENS' HOUSING

Mr. Frank Klees: I have petitions here that are signed by hundreds of seniors and their families throughout York region. It reads as follows, and I do hope the Minister of Health is listening:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) has changed its policy on how seniors living in supportive housing are served; and

"Whereas, due to this new policy of the Ontario government, seven senior homes in York region will be closing their on-site alternative community living programs on April 1, 2014, leaving 200 long-time residents living in these homes without the on-site continuous care they have been receiving from dedicated workers that have served them for years; and

"Whereas the on-site proactive and responsive care will now be replaced by a hub-and-spoke reactive care model relying on seniors themselves initiating calls for help that will have a response time of 15 minutes, at least, because the caregiver is not on-site but in a mobile unit and because this is unacceptable for seniors and residents who have for years relied on on-site staff to assist them with medical equipment, medical assistance, personal and other unanticipated needs; and

"Whereas the closure of the on-site care service will lead to inadequate care to meet the true needs of the seniors and residents and will result in undue hardship on residents and their families; and

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: That the Ontario government reverse its decision that is leading to the closure of the alternative community living programs in seven seniors' and retirement homes in York region and that the government stop the transfer of on-site continuous and proactive care to a reactive call with 15 minutes' delay for care that will lower the quality of life for seniors and residents in the seven affected homes."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition, and I do trust that the Minister of Health is taking note.

OPPOSITION DAY

JOB CREATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I move that, in the opinion of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Ontario families need to see a long-term plan for more full-time jobs;

And that if the Liberal government has not tabled a budget or implemented the million jobs plan by the end of this fiscal year, the House leaders of the three recognized parties should schedule a debate and vote on the motion of want of confidence number 2, appearing on the March 19, 2014, Orders and Notices paper, standing in the name of Jim Wilson, MPP, Simcoe-Grey, following routine proceedings on Wednesday, April 2, 2014. This is addressed to the Premier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Wilson has moved opposition day motion number 3. I recognize the member for Simcoe-Grey for the leadoff in this debate.

Mr. Jim Wilson: This is certainly an attempt by our party to, first of all, ask the government, particularly Premier Wynne, who has no mandate directly from the people of Ontario—only from the Liberal Party of Ontario—if she feels she has the confidence of this House and therefore the confidence of the people of Ontario through this House, to put that to the test. She has been Premier for a little over a year and she has not been put to the test by this Legislature.

It is our parliamentary tradition that governments must hold the confidence of the Legislature at all times. We've had a long time since that has been put to the test. In fact, it was in the 2011 general election time that that would have been put to the test of the general public. Again, it has been over a year since Premier Wynne has been Premier of the province. We're looking for the NDP to support us.

We need a jobs plan. So this motion today says that if you don't put your budget forward—which we assume will hopefully be, finally after 11 years, a jobs plan for this province—by the end of this fiscal year, which is March 31, just coming up, then adopt the leader of the PC Party's job plan, the million jobs bill that has been put forward by Mr. Hudak. Steal those ideas—five really good, solid points in that plan. We welcome the govern-

ment to borrow and implement what's needed for bringing jobs back to the province.

1400

So we have a want-of-confidence motion that I have filed, the second one that we've filed since the 2011 election, calling on the government to implement Mr. Hudak's jobs plan or bring forward a plan of their own. But there is a time frame here. You already, together with the NDP, were propped up just a few weeks ago, just before we went to the March break—by the NDP, when they propped you up in the supply motion, which means you've paid all the bills for the year coming, so you don't actually have to bring forward a budget. A nice parliamentary trick, but I bet the people back home, because they read the paper and see the media every day, think that you actually have to bring forward a budget. You don't. You've got the bills paid because you were propped up, once again, just before the March break, by the NDP.

Now today, we hope that the NDP won't, once again, prop up this corrupt Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member for Simcoe—Grey to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Yes, I will withdraw, Mr. Speaker, because I respect your ruling, but—okay, this wayward Liberal government. How many billion-dollar job scandals does one have to put up with and still expect to stay in government? The NDP seem to think that buying seats in the last election is morally right and fiscally responsible, for over a billion dollars—\$1.1 billion according to the provincial auditor. We say enough is enough, and we've been saying that since the 2011 election. Enough is enough. And we're going to continue to say it. Not alone—eHealth, Ornge, where lives were at stake. Day after day, you're just bad managers.

Last week, we were even finding out that you can't even do a cover-up properly, when it came to trying to redact or black-out certain documents provided to one of the legislative committees here by the Ministry of Finance. You couldn't even do that right. Then you got caught and you tried to smear the honourable member from Nipissing, our colleague, and tried to change the channel, as you do every day here in the Legislature and out there on the road with your press releases and that.

You have been embroiled in the worst scandals in Canadian history. If the gas plant scandal in monetary value is greater than the scandal that started the country, really, the railway scandals we had under Macdonald and company—the fact of the matter is, those scandals in today's dollars pale in comparison to the waste that you've had.

The young Vanstone girl in my riding—

Interjection: Madi.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Madi. I know in your riding, Mr. Speaker, and in many ridings across the province—actually, I was telling the Rotary Club in Wasaga Beach recently, “If you think billion-dollar scandals don't affect your lives, look at what's happening in the Ministry of

Health right now.” They don't have the money for young children, for the drug Kalydeco, in this case, and other drugs that have been brought up here.

More and more often, with frequency now, cases are appearing where ministries don't have the money for the basic programs, and that's what's happening. This does affect your lives. Stop telling me when I see you, “I don't care about politics.” This does affect your lives, and the scandals are coming home to roost. It's time that you, as voters in the province of Ontario, had your opportunity to go back to the polls and bring full judgment on this government.

We say enough is enough. Maybe we're not right. Maybe we're missing something, but I don't think so. I think, if you were honest and morally upright, you would go to the polls—and first you would seek, through a want-of-confidence motion, the confidence of this House. If you don't get that, you should go do the polls and do the right thing and live up to parliamentary democracy, which so many people died for and defended in this country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me to speak on this opposition day motion. I'm sure you will not be surprised to hear that I will be speaking against this motion, for a variety of reasons.

Let me just start with a very basic review or reminder of how our representative parliamentary Westminster model of democracy works. It's really, perhaps “irritating” is the word when you hear misdescription of our system. I'll tell you why it irritates me: It's because part of our job as members of provincial Parliament is to be role models and educate our young people in how our system works. In fact, we are called upon quite regularly, all of us members, to go and speak to grade 5 and grade 10 civics classes. If we don't understand our system well, I fear, what are we really educating them on our systems when we as individuals go to classrooms to talk about our system of democracy?

Speaker, last time I checked, in a Westminster model of democracy, Premiers are not elected. This is not the United States of America. We don't elect a President and a Vice-President. That's not on the ballot. What we elect are local representatives to represent our local constituencies. I have the great privilege to represent the constituency of Ottawa Centre, and every member has a constituency that is assigned to them, because they chose to run and a majority of people who voted in that community—or not a majority; they got the most votes within that community, and that's why they represent them. Then it is the collective in this House that decides who is going to be the leader of the government.

We speak on behalf of our individual communities and we hold confidence votes in the House through various mechanisms. If the leader of the majority of the group, the Premier in this instance, gets the most votes of this House, then she has absolute legitimate authority in our system to form government. So in the case of our current

Premier, the member from Don Valley West—because that's the riding she represents—after she became the leader of the Ontario Liberal Party and came to the Premier's seat, she presented a speech from the throne. Speaker, as I know you know, the speech from the throne is a confidence vote; it's a confidence motion. At that time, if a majority of the members in this House would have not voted in support of that speech from the throne, that Premier would not have had the confidence of the members. But guess what, Speaker? A majority of the members in the House voted in support of that confidence motion. Therefore, this Premier, the MPP from Don Valley West, has full legitimacy to be the Premier and the leader of the government.

That is how our system works. There is no direct mandate. Those notions are incorrect. I fear, again, there are pages in this chamber who are listening to this debate and we are teaching them something incorrect and improper. We should refrain from doing so. I understand politics, but please do not distort our system of democracy.

I want to add further that the Premier not only has received a vote of confidence through the passage of the speech from the throne in February 2013 when she sought the confidence of the majority of the members of the House, which she received, but since then she put forward a budget motion that passed in this House. She put forward a budget bill that passed through first reading, a confidence motion; second reading, a confidence motion; committee, a confidence motion; third reading, a confidence motion. By my count, including the speech from the throne, she has been voted five times in this House on a confidence motion. Actually, then there were the supply votes, which were also a confidence motion. So I think there have been about seven or eight instances where a majority of the members of this House have said to the government and the member from Don Valley West, as the leader of the government, that they have confidence in her abilities to represent the government: point final. That is how our system works.

I can guarantee you, Speaker, one more thing: that in the next election, again, we will not be voting for a Premier. There will be no such thing on the ballot, saying "Premier," with three or four or five names next to it. Our system does not work that way.

1410

Interjection.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Please, please, do us all a favour. We're intelligent people here. Do not misrepresent our system. If you want to live and work in the United States of America, I welcome you to go run in a district there and be part of that system. Our system is very different. Do our future generations a favour. Do these pages a favour. Let's tell them accurately and properly how our system works.

I got that off my chest, Speaker. It's been bugging me for some time. I think I've heard the member from Beaches East–York talk about this, too, quite eloquently, agreeing that we need to make sure we don't improperly

portray our system, because I think there is a higher onus on us as elected representatives to relay the right information.

I just want to talk about a couple more things. I think that's very important in my opposition to this particular motion. One, there is no defined time frame. Again, it goes back to convention because our system so much is based on convention. There is no defined time frame as to when a budget needs to come. We've passed the supply motion so the government has the capacity to pay its civil servants. Of course, there are time limitations to that. I believe we've got six months.

Governments at different times in different periods have brought in budgets at a different time frame. There is no rule out there that says the budget has to be presented by March 31, by fiscal end. That again is a construct the opposition is trying to create. They're trying to give this impression somehow that that type of rule exists.

Interjection.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Yes. I think a case in point, Speaker, is when the opposition party—the Progressive Conservatives were in government. Let's just look at their record. It's only fair that we look at their record as to when they brought in their own budgets because if this particular rule applied—I can tell you that they presented about eight budgets when they were in government. They were offside on every single one of them. Right? For example, the first PC 1996 budget: May 7; 1997, May 6; 1998, May 5; 1999, May 4; 2000, May 2; 2001, May 9; 2002, June 17; 2003, their very last budget, May 22.

If there is a March 31 rule, which I would like to hear one of the speakers point out to me—maybe I'm a lawyer so I like technicalities, some legalese—then they were offside on every single one of them. So one more cogent reason I would argue not to vote for this particular motion is because the motion is without any merit.

The last point I will make is around job creation. Collectively, as a province, every single Ontarian in this great province of ours has been working extremely hard to come out of the great recession. That great recession of 2008–09 came without warning and as a surprise not just to Ontario and Ontarians but to Canada and Canadians and around the world. Collectively, all the governments around the world put their bright minds together to make sure they responded to that great recession, which was the biggest recession since the Great Depression. I'm not the one describing it that way. Economists and political scientists have defined that recession in the same manner.

We all worked hard together to stimulate the economy. In fact, every government in Canada borrowed money to invest back in our communities to stimulate the economy, to save jobs, and our government—and I'm very proud to say that—did the same.

Since then, we've also been working very hard to make sure the economy continues to grow and we recover the jobs that were lost. Speaker, numbers don't lie. The numbers are—and these are Statistics Canada numbers. Again, don't believe my numbers. I'm not

making up the numbers. These are the numbers from Statistics Canada, which is one of the most renowned statistics agencies around the world. They tell us that Ontario, since the depth of the recession, which was June 2009, has created 446,000 jobs up to now. That's all the jobs that were lost in the recession and more. That's the real number.

By the way, the federal Conservative government—which I just raise from the point of view of giving more merit to my argument because I know the party opposite that brought the motion likes to think what the federal Conservatives have done is right. They quote the million jobs that they have created since the depth of the recession, using exactly the same data from Statistics Canada. When the federal Conservative government talks about the million jobs they have created since the depth of the recession across Canada, 446,000 of that million took place right here in Ontario.

We are definitely doing something right in growing our economy. More needs to be done. We need to continue to take a steady course in that direction. We don't have the time or have the luxury to engage in radical or risky ideas. That's why I think the course that our government has taken, the six-point economic plan that our Premier has put forward, has produced results and will continue to do so. That's why I will be voting against this particular motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity. I'm proud to speak about this very important motion that was brought forward by our party's House leader, Mr. Wilson, the member for Simcoe–Grey. It's an important motion because it really speaks to the urgency of the jobs and the fiscal crisis that Ontario is facing today.

Here we are, in the midst of that crisis, where we have 300,000 people who have lost good-paying jobs in the manufacturing sector, and where we have a government that has doubled the province's debt in 10 years and whose latest budget had an \$11.7-billion hole in it. Instead of coming forward as a government with a plan to make things better, this government, I suggest, has done nothing. In fact, they've made things worse in the province.

Just last week our finance critic, the member for Nipissing, revealed the government has known for over a year that its fiscal plan is off the rails. He has proven that the Premier and her cabinet have knowingly hidden from the public the fact that there's a shortfall of \$4.5 billion in their fiscal projections.

When you have that kind of problem as a government, you've really got two choices; you've got two things you can do. You can take the high road. You can make the honourable choice by coming clean with the members of the Legislature and the public and then present a plan on how you're going to fix it.

The other option is to take the path that I suggest the Wynne government is following, and that is to hide the

truth away and pretend that it's business as usual. Worse, when you get called out and exposed, like you did last week with the member for Nipissing, you then launch a shameful personal attack on the member, as opposition critic, for doing a job and holding this out-of-control government to account.

The way that episode unfolded last week, I think it gives Ontarians a bit of insight into the depths this government is willing to go to, to save their skin.

When you look at this motion, for those watching at home—we in our party have taken a look at the situation in Ontario, where we have too many people out of work. We've got a growing debt and a deficit that's jeopardizing the services that Ontarians really want most. The two services that I think are most put in jeopardy by this government's ways are health and education.

But instead of an action for a government that is responsible for creating this mess, we see that they really have no plan. In fact, we're hearing in some circles that we're not going to hear from this government, in the form of their budget, for a month. You've heard from my House leader today, talking about the supply motion, that there is some fear that there won't be a budget tabled at all this spring.

I think what is happening is that we're spinning our wheels while our competitors around Canada, North America and the world are eating our lunch.

Recognizing the urgency of the situation we're facing in Ontario, we have tabled this motion for the government to introduce their budget by March 31 and implement the only jobs plan that is on the order paper right now in the province of Ontario. It's Tim Hudak's million jobs plan. We need that plan to get our economy kick-started. We've said this before: If you don't have your own plan, take ours, but actually act like a government, table your budget and deal with the consequences.

This is what we're trying to deal with this afternoon. I appreciate the work that my House leader has done to table it today. We think it's the accountability that employers demand, for us to deal with this very, very critical issue.

1420

I expect the opposition, the third party—we haven't heard from them yet this afternoon. They passed on their rotation, but I hope that they'll support our motion. It's our job—both opposition parties—to hold the government to account and to ensure that there are consequences when they fail to do their job. Our motion is designed to do those things.

Speaker, I have to digress a bit and talk about the Liberal convention that took place on the weekend. You know when the Liberal Party gets together, they're going to lay it on a bit thick, and you have to really take what they are saying with a grain of salt. But after I heard what I heard, you could use all the salt that would melt all the ice and snow across Ontario with some of the rhetoric that I heard at this convention. It showed me that the government is so completely out of touch with reality in this province.

I think this motion serves to put the opposition on a frame to really send this government and put it on its heels.

I can't believe what I heard when I heard the Premier use the words "safe hands." Come on; safe hands? Let's not forget these so-called safe hands have their fingerprints on every scandal that this tainted government has, this track record of scandalous behaviour and mismanagement that cost Ontarians billions and caused this government to lose all credibility with the hard-working people of the province of Ontario. We're all too familiar with the list: eHealth, Ornge, the Green Energy Act, the growing Pan Am Games spending debacle and, of course, the granddaddy of them all, the gas plant scandal.

You also have to remember that, as a senior cabinet—*Interjections.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize for interrupting the member for Leeds–Grenville, but there is a conversation going on across the floor, right in front of me, and it's making it difficult for me to hear the member for Leeds–Grenville. I do need to hear him. I'll return to him now. He has the floor.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you.

The Premier was the senior cabinet minister. She was the Liberal campaign co-chair. She's now the Premier. She has had those unsafe hands on the wheel that is basically driving Ontarians over the fiscal cliff. I'd say the only safe thing that we can do, as an opposition, is to get those hands off the wheel and to put the wheel in motion so that we can stop the damage that has been done by this government already.

The other thing she said, and again, I couldn't believe it—she used the words "laser focus on helping working families." I don't know. I think that they're going to have to readjust that laser, because I don't think it's helping. It's actually hurting. Some will say it's attacking families across the province.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Maybe she was talking about the Working Families Coalition.

Mr. Steve Clark: She possibly could, the member for Nepean–Carlton.

If this government is really on the side of hard-working families, I'd hate to see what a government that wasn't on the side of families, launched by Premier Wynne, would be.

I think we have said it on this side many times: We've got 600,000 people who are out of work now. We need to change the path that Ontario is on right now. I have outlined some of the concerns that I've had. I really believe that this government needs to change its focus. Companies like Kellogg's, Heinz and Caterpillar have all announced they're leaving the province. They are not stopping in terms of manufacturing products, Speaker; they're just making a conscious decision not to operate here in the province.

Earlier, I mentioned health and education—I think part of what I'm concerned about is agriculture in my riding. I stood up last week in favour of the tradition of agricultural education in Ontario. I'm speaking, of course,

about the government's refusal to grant a two-year moratorium on the closure of Kemptville and Alfred agricultural colleges. While the decision, as the government has said, may have been announced by the University of Guelph, it's unfolding that the support of this Premier, in her capacity as a part-time Minister of Agriculture—they are allowing this to happen. They're allowing this erosion. She's allowing this erosion as the part-time Minister of Agriculture. I think it's tragic, where you make these statements about the agri-food industry, about how you want them to create 120,000 new jobs, which is a challenge to achieve, and then you're making a decision and allowing a decision to take place where agriculture education can't take place close to home.

I'm confident that with the support I've received for my moratorium—my call for a moratorium has been supported by a number of counties, by the Catholic District School Board and a number of farm groups out there and over 7,000 people who have either signed my petition online or on paper. To be clear, I think that the group, locally, is doing a wonderful job. We're working together. I know that the member from Nepean–Carleton and I were on a conference call with Algonquin. We had a great meeting with Algonquin. I was at the quarterly meeting at St. Lawrence College on Friday. There are some partners that are coming forward—very, very preliminary—and I really do think that a two-year moratorium would be the best way for us to protect our assets at both the colleges and to be able to give us time to put a path forward. But again, this is the problem with this government. They hide behind others and they're not allowing the local community to make a decision.

The good news is that in a minority Parliament the opposition does hold the cards. Our Ontario PC caucus and the NDP have an opportunity to work together this afternoon to put this government on notice that the clock is ticking. Our caucus is prepared to do that. We'll find out today if the leader of the third party and her caucus are finally ready to play that card so that we can see if they're willing to push the government when it comes to playing that card: whether they're going to play it or whether they're going to fold. I look forward to hearing from them today, and I look forward to other opposition members speaking in favour of this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I always like to rise after the member from Leeds–Grenville because he gives me so much ammunition. I like to rise because he's asking whether we'll play our cards or fold them. I think he thinks he's Kenny Rogers; I hope he can sing. But I want to tell you that this is not the issue to do that. If I have ever seen such a misguided motion before this House, I have seen it today. If I have ever seen anything that is so unworkable, I have seen it today.

Here is a motion that is asking that this House, in seven days, takes matters into its own hands if the Minister of Finance does not deliver a budget. How, possibly, could the Minister of Finance deliver a budget in seven

days that he hasn't announced? This Minister of Finance, for all of his faults—and I'm sure he has some; even the Liberals might admit that—is holding consultations until the 28th of March. It's published. There are people who are lined up to talk about what they want to see in this budget. How can he possibly, at that point, produce a budget by the 31st of March?

Miss Monique Taylor: Unless he's not listening.

Mr. Michael Prue: Unless, of course, as my colleague so rightly points out, he's not listening to the people who are lining up this week. The reality is that this motion is doomed to fail from the outset because it is illogical for anyone to say that the Minister of Finance has to produce a budget by the 31st of March, or else—and here's the kicker. What is the "or else"? The "or else" is that the three party House leaders agree to set down a debate on a Conservative motion on April 2. My goodness. The three party House leaders have to be in agreement. There has to be unanimity. You've already heard that the Liberals are not going to agree to this. Therefore, there is virtually no possibility whatsoever, even should the motion pass today, that the House leader for the Liberal Party is going to stand up, in his wisdom, and state: "I want a debate to bring down my government because this motion passed." It is simply not going to happen. This is probably one of the most irrelevant motions I have ever seen in this House.

1430

The members of the Conservative Party, whom sometimes I love dearly, are asking me to support something. They've asked me to support this. I have to tell you: Probably the greatest philosopher of all time, Socrates—and in my own right I even think he was better than both Aristotle and Plato—coined only a couple of phrases that have been written down and that have passed to eternity. My favourite one from Socrates is, "Sir, I would gladly be persuaded by you, but not against my better judgment." That's what this is all about today: How can I be persuaded when my judgment tells me that this motion is so irreparably wrong, and that it has virtually no chance of success and is just an opportunity for the Tories to heap scorn not only on the government, but increasingly on the NDP. I can only ask, why is that happening? It has to happen because they are afraid. They are nervous. They are wondering what we're going to do, and they're wondering how much people are starting to listen to our message.

Let's go over what this motion continues to say. This motion continues to talk about the Tories' million jobs plan. Oh, my goodness, the million jobs plan. This morning, I opened up the paper. I like to look for new words and new phrases. I am indebted to Carol Goar. I don't know how many of you read her column, but she used a word in that column which I have not seen or read for, I don't know, maybe decades. The word is "tautology."

I had to stop and think about what tautological thought was. You know what it is? It's a great word. It's people talking endless reams of knowledge, or lack of knowledge, over and over and over again, hoping that this

thing that makes no sense will suddenly make sense to people. That's what tautology is.

Every year they come up with new words in the dictionary. The newest one this year is a "selfie." You know, when you take a picture of yourself? They're including the new words in the dictionary. "Selfie" has made the English dictionary for this year. I think that next year "tautology" might be a great one, but they're not going to put down that word, because that word is as old as Shakespeare. What they're going to write down is "million jobs plan." They're going to say, "Because this is a thing that has been repeated over and over and over, ad nauseam, and that really means nothing at all." It has been repeated to the point that some members of that party even think it's true.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm glad the Liberals are laughing, because I turn my attention now to them.

I listened in this House in incredulity, absolutely, as the then-finance minister, Dwight Duncan, stood up probably a dozen times, in his own tautological universe, and talked about the HST and the 600,000 jobs it was going to create. Remember that, all of you, the 600,000 jobs that Ontario was going to get as soon as we put in the HST? You know something? I'm still counting; I'm still waiting. It was a number pulled out of thin air, out of the ethereal stuff beyond us. Dwight Duncan kept talking about that, and once in a while, the then Premier would pipe in about 600,000 jobs. They kept talking and talking and talking about it, until even they believed it. Today, some of them will tell you they created the 600,000 jobs. What a load of rubbish. What a total load of rubbish that was, these numbers pulled out of a hat.

Then I listened more to the Liberals. Remember when they came in with the green plan: "We're going to create 50,000 jobs immediately with our new green plan." How many of those 50,000 jobs have actually materialized? And even if there were a few—and I would admit there were a few—how many jobs were lost because of the green plan? That's the important thing, because the auditor has told us that for every job that was created in the green plan, four jobs were lost as a result of it.

I listen to these—600,000, 50,000, 100 million; whatever number they make up—with a huge, huge grain of salt.

The government also talked about their glorious plans to cut taxes—business, corporate taxes—and how many jobs they were going to create. I sat in this House and I listened, first of all, to Greg Sorbara, and then I listened to Dwight Duncan, and now I listen to Charles Sousa—excuse me; he's the Minister of Finance. The past ones, I can talk about them with their names.

I listen to them, and they all talk about cutting corporate tax cuts, as the Conservatives do too, and how many jobs this is going to create. Well, I'll tell you, it doesn't create any jobs at all, and the government members know it and my Conservative colleagues know it too.

Even Jim Flaherty, the finance minister for Canada, who this week announced his retirement, he knows it too. He said that all that has happened—we all know that all

that has happened with those tax cuts is they have gone to line the pockets of the corporate profits. They're sitting on hundreds of billions of dollars of money that we have let them get away with, and they're not creating the jobs and the infrastructure that we need in this country. There is the whole thing; I don't know.

Anyway, we have a duty in this country to look after the people of the middle class, because they make up the overwhelming majority of people and the overwhelming majority of the taxpayers who pay the freight. When you go out into your constituencies, as I was last week on Friday—I went out and I had a man come to me, totally desperate. He's 62 years of age. He is desperately looking for a job. He is not ready to retire. In fact, he can't retire. He doesn't have a pension. He can get CPP several years early, but he knows that if he takes that, it's going to cut back on what he would get, had he ordinarily retired at 65 or 67 or 70 years of age. He's desperately looking for work, and he cannot find work, due in part to his age and in part to a slight disability as a result of an industrial accident. He cannot find work.

He was asking me if there was anything I could do. It was very difficult to tell that poor man that there was very little that I, as an MPP, could do to help him find a job. Within the public service of Ontario, there are tests and there are interviews. Politicians should not and do not get involved in the hiring of people at any level of the government. I told him, "Please don't give up. Please continue to try." He promised me that he would.

But it is the reality of many middle-class people, who suddenly, for the first time in their lives, find that they no longer have a job in this province, that they have to come in to see people like me in the overwhelming hope that something can be found.

I talked a little bit to that man about his life. He was having a hard time with the rent. He was having an even harder time with electricity payments, a huge problem with electricity payments. He was worried that those were going to continue to rise. He was worried about a great many things.

People are worried about the electricity. They're worried about home heating. They're worried about a thousand things that ordinary people need to do every day. They need to put food on the table. They have expenses that have to be paid.

They wonder what this government is doing about all of that. They wonder why the employment rate is so stubborn in Ontario, in spite of the 600,000 jobs that would be created or the 50,000 jobs in green energy. How come the unemployment rate in Ontario has been stubbornly above the national average for the past five or six years? It never once got below the national average. It's pretty sad.

They wonder why it is that big companies in this province are walking away, and not only the Heinzes, not only the Kelloggsses. Even the others that traditionally have come looking for some kind of support from the Ontario government give up, pack their tents and leave, as Cliffs did in the Ring of Fire, or as I'm afraid Chrysler may do in Windsor and Brampton.

We have lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. As Bruce Springsteen once mightily said, "The jobs are gone, boy, and they ain't coming back." That's as a result of what this government has done in its finances, in its electricity policy and in everything else that they have tried to put together in the last 10 years. I'm hoping that those jobs will come back, but they will only come back if we change the channel.

I listened today to the Minister of Economic Development. Oh, my goodness, he stands up and says a whole lot of stuff that I don't think there's much—how can I put it? It's ethereal. It does not have very much substance. Maybe that's the kindest way I can put it.

1440

He talks about the NDP's plan. He said that it has been thrown aside by Obama—news to me; it seems to me very much part of the Democratic plan in the United States—and he says that his economic gurus say it's going to cost \$2 billion. I don't know. I really have some problems with what he's saying, and I'm going to deal with those at the end.

So let's get back to the Conservatives for a minute. They're saying that, you know, they are going to create a million jobs. They haven't told us how those million jobs are going to be created, except that they're promising even more corporate tax cuts. They want it to go from 11.5% down to 10%. We're already the lowest corporate tax policy state or province in the whole of North America. As a result of that policy, we have lined many, many pockets, and as a result of that policy, we find ourselves with a debt at \$11 billion, with no real chance of it going anywhere.

Stop and think, everybody in this place. I know the Conservatives have talked about this. Stop and think, please, Liberals opposite me: Had the corporate taxes remained where they were when McGuinty first assumed office as Premier of this province—they were around 15% at that point—we would have no deficit. Think about that just for a second. Let that sink in. We would have no deficit, none whatsoever, because the taxes between the 11.5% where it is now and 15% would have been the equivalent of some \$10 billion.

I'm asking people, especially my colleagues opposite me in the Liberal Party, is this the Ontario that you see? Is this the Ontario that you covet? Is this the Ontario that you want to go forward to? Or, to use the Premier's own words, is this that to which you aspire, having the wealthiest people and the corporations pay the smallest taxes in all of North America, not putting the money back into the economy, and seeing the middle class and the poor, those on ODSP and fixed income, our pensioners, struggle? Because that's the reality if you continue down that path.

Now, if you look at what the Conservatives are saying, the Conservatives are saying that they want to reduce that from 11.5% down to 10%. That's their answer. That's the answer that is in this motion. I would suggest to you that what this is going to do is put all of us in penury.

They've also talked about their economic plan, the Conservatives, part of their 100,000 jobs, million jobs,

whatever number it is. They've also talked about a wage freeze. They want to impose a wage freeze on all public employees. It's a tough one. It's a tough one. I know if you're a public employee, you are not likely to think very much of this. I know I was a public employee myself many years ago when I worked for the federal government in the Department of Immigration. I remember when they froze our wages. I remember the bitterness of the people and I remember the concerted action that followed that wage freeze for months, where people did less work than normal. They did it, and I'll tell you, they did it on purpose, and I'll tell you that the government soon came to realize that that was not the solution.

I wonder, for my colleagues from the Conservative Party, if you're so intent on freezing the wages of those people who earn \$40,000 or \$50,000 a year, as most public employees do, then why have you been so silent on the freezing or the lowering of wages of your good friends the CEOs who make \$600,000, \$700,000, \$800,000 or \$1.5 million a year? We in the NDP think that if there is to be anything done in the public employment sector, it needs to start at the top. As a matter of fact, that may be sufficient in and of itself, because there is nobody in this province, I would put to you, Mr. Speaker, who is worth more than twice as much as the Premier of Ontario makes—nobody at all. I don't care whether they work in economic development or in hydro or anywhere else. If a salary of \$500,000 is not good enough for them, then I'm sure there are other people who are equally as capable who would be willing to do it in their stead.

I turn to another one of the Conservatives' economic plans that is part of this million jobs scheme, and that is to kill the College of Trades. With the greatest of respect, although the College of Trades has problems and I wonder whether it is too all-encompassing or all-embracing to take in people such as the hairdressers who were here today, surely, there is some merit to the College of Trades. The merit lies in, first of all, the safety aspect, where people who are registered and know their rights and are organized will have far better safety outcomes in the future than those who are not.

Secondly, we need to get control of the underground economy, and the College of Trades is but one of the tools to do that. Literally every year, billions of dollars are siphoned out of the Ontario economy and out of the taxes available to the Ontario government—and take enormous taxes from those who do pay them because they have to make up the difference, the people who pay taxes and who belong to factories or unions or who are legitimate in claiming the monies that they've earned: The underground economy hurts all of that. If the College of Trades only does one thing, and if it regulates so that we know who is earning that kind of living and we are able to better monitor how much money they're earning, that would be a good thing.

Back to the Liberals again—I have to keep going back and forth. I watched the Premier a little bit in awe on the television this weekend, a little bit in awe sometimes in

the Legislature, in how she defines the Conservatives and the NDP as being “risky.” Risky. I have never felt that I was risky. I think I'm a mainstream kind of guy.

Do you know what I think is risky: a government that is willing to risk \$1.1 billion to elect four or five people in Mississauga. What I think is risky is a government that will not keep tabs on Ornge and all the shenanigans that went on around there. What I think is risky is a government that will waste nearly \$1 billion on eHealth and hardly show any results. What I think is risky is this government. That's what I think is risky. You have to look after the pennies; the dollars will look after themselves.

This government has not been willing to show the leadership, to show ministerial responsibility in 100 places in the years I have been here. I don't think the NDP is risky. Sometimes I don't even think the Conservatives are risky. But if you wanted me to define “risky,” I would say that risky would be ensuring that another Liberal government came to be, because this province, quite simply, cannot afford the kind of boondoggles we have become accustomed to, day in, day out, and month in, month out.

Even in my own little riding of Beaches–East York, the sadness in my community about their beloved jazz festival, the sadness of it, that the government sees fit, because they can, to simply take away the money where half a million people come together for 12 days and enjoy themselves. The cost per person who actually went there last year was about eight cents. Eight cents: That's how much was being paid.

Here is a government—and I asked another question today and I got the same kind of answer I got from the minister as I got from the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development: “Oh, you know, you know, you know, and you shouldn't be asking these questions.” Well, we need to ask these questions, because we live in this province too and the people in my riding contribute taxes too. The people have a question to ask: “How is this government spending the money?”

I remember, a few years back, I had to stand in this very place and I talked for weeks about how the government was spending money in a thing that became known as Collegiate, because Michael Colle was the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in those days, where money was being handed out to all kinds of groups and ethnic communities with no real tag to it. We didn't know what the money was for. We didn't know how it was going to be spent.

1450

Money was given away to one group, I remember, in particular. A cricket club in Toronto that didn't even ask for it got a \$1-million grant. I know that in my own riding people got grants for \$750,000 and they hadn't filled out more than a piece of paper.

I have to suggest that the same kind of thing is happening today, but in reverse. In my own riding, I feel compelled to talk about what is happening to the Beaches jazz festival and I'm sure is happening in a hundred other places around this province. It's all well and good to

make sure that money shows up in those places where I'm sure some members of the government are happy to see it spent, but in those places where it doesn't happen, we have questions to ask.

Coming back to the Premier saying that the NDP is risky, we put forward a plan—

Mr. Steve Clark: What? Your plan is to agree with whatever they say.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no. My plan is not to agree with whatever they say. Your plan is to agree with whatever they say. I have to take some umbrage with what my colleague in the Conservative Party had to say. They want to cut the corporate taxes even more than Liberals, with the same vain hope that something will happen—and it will not.

We, on the other hand, have a plan that is diametrically opposed to that. Our plan is going to ensure that people who create jobs get the money for it.

I heard the Minister of Economic Development say today that our plan was going to bankrupt the province. I never thought I would hear such hooey from a single person in this Legislature as what he spoke today.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Hooey?

Mr. Michael Prue: Hooey. Yes. I am compelled not to use words that I think would be more appropriate, but hooey will work.

Our plan says one thing: It says that we will give industry, small business especially, \$500,000 for each job that they create. The Liberals say that's going to cost \$2 billion. But I will tell you—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Michael, \$5,000. Correct your record; it's \$5,000.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's \$5,000; that's what I said. I just said that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You said \$500,000.

Mr. Michael Prue: Excuse me; \$5,000.

Let's do the math: \$5,000 a job to actually reach \$2 billion in expenditure will produce 400,000 jobs—400,000 jobs before \$2 billion is spent. Now, if you spend \$2 billion and you create 400,000 jobs, don't you think that some of the money will come back? Don't you think that the province will be better off? This is what I don't understand when he's talking about how it's going to bankrupt us.

But let's just talk a little bit more about this. Spending \$2 billion now will not cost even \$2 billion because, as we have so carefully pointed out, the government spends \$2 billion on a whole bunch of fragmented services today. As Mr. Drummond has carefully pointed out, if that was consolidated into a single plan—and we think our plan is a good one—that would save a quarter of a billion dollars in and of itself. If we spent \$2 billion and saved \$250 million and created 400,000 jobs, it would certainly be a plan that you could see in black and white and, I would think, that people out there in the small business community would welcome.

There are some safeguards to our plan. No company can claim more than 10% of the actual salary, so to get \$5,000, they would have to pay \$50,000 in wages. There

are a lot of places that hire people for less than \$50,000. So \$5,000 is the max; nobody could get more than \$5,000 for a single job. In fact, many of them would be lucky to get \$2,500 or \$3,000 for the average industrial wage in this province.

The second thing we're talking about is a maximum of \$100,000 per company, so nobody could go out and hire more than 20 new hires at \$50,000 each and get that kind of money. It simply wouldn't happen. If they hired more than that, they wouldn't be eligible.

We also have set it to sunset in 2015-16, which is only two years from now, and we would see those net new jobs come on board and the economy start to move. I don't think that's reckless. I don't think it's risky. I don't think what the Premier has said is true, and I certainly know what the Minister of Economic Development said today was totally and completely misguided.

Mr. Speaker, we have the opposition's resolution. We have what they are trying to do here today. It's a sad little motion. It's a motion with no real substance. It is a motion of tautology. It is a motion that is stretching the limits of the statement that they will create a million jobs. It simply will not. It cannot.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What was that word you used again, Michael?

Mr. Michael Prue: "Tautology." Look it up.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Could you spell it out for Norm?

Mr. Michael Prue: No; Norm knows how to spell.

In reality, it is doomed to failure because the seven-day time frame cannot be met, and as I have stated at the beginning, the three party House leaders will not agree, even should the motion pass here today.

Reluctantly, I cannot support this—reluctantly. There has to be another avenue, and in my view that avenue will come on that magic day sometime in May, when the Minister of Finance stands in his place, when we hear what he has to say. If the budget is going to be anything like what I heard from the Premier this past weekend, we may find ourselves no longer in this House but on the streets.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for your rapt attention.

To all of those here, I am imploring my friends not to support this motion but to save your energy for budget day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm pleased to join the debate this afternoon on the opposition day motion. Like the previous speaker, the member from Beaches–East York, I will not be supporting this motion. Unlike the speaker, however, I'm glad the motion is here. I think the sort of debate we have in this House—I think this is the way to do it; that each party puts its best foot forward and says, "This is what we would do. This is how we would approach this issue." What we have before us is the best foot forward from the opposition party.

It reads:

"That, in the opinion of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Ontario families need to see a long-term plan for more full-time jobs;

"And that if the Liberal government has not tabled a budget or implemented the million jobs plan by the end of this fiscal year, the House leaders of the three recognized parties should schedule a debate and vote on the motion of want of confidence number 2 appearing on the March 19, 2014, Orders and Notices paper, standing in the name of Jim Wilson, MPP, Simcoe-Grey, following routine proceedings on Wednesday, April 2, 2014. Addressed to the Premier."

What I find in the province of Ontario, Speaker, and in my own community is that most people know that the province of Ontario has a budget, and they know that that budget is presented on an annual basis and is voted upon. Outside of that, I'm not sure if the average person on the street understands the process that moves along as that budget is formed.

Certainly, there will be some members in the House who are on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs—and I have chaired that committee for a number of years. We travel around the province of Ontario and solicit opinions from people as to what they'd like to see in the budget and, conversely, what they wouldn't like to see in the budget; what they think has worked and what we need more of; what hasn't worked and perhaps they see it's time to not fund those types of things.

Speaker, this year the committee determined it was going to travel to some non-traditional places. Ordinarily, it goes to Windsor, to London, to Toronto, to Ottawa. This year, we thought we'd go to some places we don't often visit. We went to Sarnia. The member for Sarnia was there and was a part of the proceedings.

1500

We heard from people in his riding. We went to Oakville. As Chair of the committee, I think this was the first time that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs was able to meet in Oakville, and I think the people in my riding were quite happy about that. We didn't want to leave people out from the centre of the universe here in Toronto, so we did do a day in Toronto. We went to Peterborough. Now, I don't think you can go to northwestern Ontario without going to Thunder Bay, so we did go to Thunder Bay. The finance critic from the Conservative Party asked if we would go to North Bay, and we gladly obliged. Then we went to Kingston, and, at one point, to satisfy the wishes of Ms. Fife, we went to Kitchener.

So I think we got a pretty good cross-section of what the people of Ontario were thinking about the current fiscal situation, what they think we should be doing more of as a government and what perhaps we should be doing less of or changing.

If I translate that into some of the things people like seeing in my own riding of Oakville, we've got Ford, where we've entered into an agreement. To give some credit to the federal government for a change, they were

part of that. We managed to secure 3,000 jobs at the Oakville assembly plant at Ford.

The GO train: If you take a GO train from Union Station out to Oakville, certainly, or Burlington or Hamilton, it used to run about hourly. Now they're running every 30 minutes all day long; rush hour, anywhere from seven to eight minutes. I think we can do better than that, but certainly it was a huge step forward to see us bringing forward trains that are running 30 minutes a day—every 30 minutes each and every day.

The new hospital we have now has cost over \$2 billion. It's a huge investment; it's a major investment. People in town are very, very pleased to see it. During construction, it's going to have about 1,200 jobs on-site.

And anybody who has ridden along the QEW will know that we've got HOV lanes on the QEW, and they were obviously a part of the bridge widenings and some of the other major infrastructure.

The reason I bring these up is that these are all projects that in my own riding people were very, very glad to see. They've been asking for them for some years. They are very expensive projects. I think we could go through each of the ridings of each of the members in this House and find projects that people in town are really asking for.

My point in saying all this, Speaker, is that they all originate in a budget. What happens is, a decision is made by all three parties, a decision is made by one party in a majority government, and we decide what we're able to do during that year, what we're able to accomplish with the financial resources that we have available to us. So you have a process in place. The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs has done its work. It has been out to the community. It has come back with the best possible advice from the people of the province of Ontario. Each of the parties issued a dissenting opinion as to what they thought should be done, having heard from the people around the province and all the communities that I outlined, and that report has been presented to the House. The finance minister now has the benefit of that report, and that has come directly from stakeholders and from very ordinary people who just decided they were going to take a few minutes out of their life and speak to their government and tell them what they thought should be included in the budget.

Now, at the same time the Minister of Finance has been out doing the same types of consultations around the province, talking to people that obviously have an interest in the financial issues that surround the government of the province of Ontario, knowing, as I think we all know, we've been through some really tough times, 2008-09, probably the largest financial events in my lifetime and probably the largest negative financial events in my lifetime.

Jurisdictions around the world, Ontario included, responded in a variety of ways. What we tried to do here in the province of Ontario was to make sure that we were going to implement a financial process that was manageable but, at the same time we were going to continue to

invest in the services and in the people of the province of Ontario as well. We were trying to strike a balance between those, Speaker.

We knew that we might have to run a deficit—in fact, we did have to run a deficit—in order to accomplish those things, but we wanted to ensure that that deficit was money well spent, that it was invested in people, that it was invested in people or in companies in a way that was going to have a payback at some time in the future. We're starting to see that, and I think we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. The government is on the road out of a deficit. Gradually, the deficit has been brought down, and we're still looking at 2017-18 as a time to bring us out of the deficit. As a result of that, and as an example to the rest of the people in the province of Ontario, MPPs in the House have agreed in the past to a wage freeze and have been asked in the future to agree to a wage freeze that would go all the way till the time that the budget is balanced in 2019, and I'm very supportive of that. I think it sets the tone for the rest of the province, that if we all work together and moderate our expectations as far as the income we may be receiving from the public sector, we can work through this together.

I'm quite happy to see this here, Speaker, because the opposition motion speaks to a different way of doing it, and it's not a way that I think is a way that should be accepted by this House, because it appears to have been written or organized in a very hurried manner. I don't think it really thinks through the process that has been employed by all three parties when they've had the privilege of forming government in the province of Ontario, and it's not one that I think speaks highly of the process that should be employed.

The motion, as you will know, is saying that if a budget is not in place by April 2, all sorts of bad things will follow and the million-dollar—what is it called?—the million jobs plan gets implemented automatically or something. There are not many people on this side of the House who put any confidence in the million jobs plan. What we see when we look at the figures that accompany that plan are cutbacks, layoffs and really not taking the province in the direction that it was supposed to go.

Obviously when somebody asks you to do something, you go back and look at what has happened in the past, what has happened in this jurisdiction in presenting a budget. What is the tradition of that? The Progressive Conservative Party, from 1996 to 2003, introduced—I guess this would be eight budgets: May 6; May 7, one year; May 5, another year; May 4, another year. There's a pattern there. I think what they were trying to do was introduce it during the first week of May—May 2, May 9. Then it went to June 17. The famous one we all remember with the hidden deficit that we didn't find out until the Auditor General was able to probe a little bit deeper was on May 22, 2003. That's where we changed the rules, Speaker. We said, "We're not going to have that again. Before a budget is ever presented in this House again, we're going to have the auditor take a look at the books of the government and do it in a very open

way so we're all dealing with what are really the real numbers."

I'm not supportive of this motion at all, Speaker. It looks like a bit of a gimmick. I don't fault the opposition parties for bringing it forward. It's their job. I think they're capable of better, to be honest with you, Speaker—some good, sound financial advice in here; maybe some way that we could have changed the budget. Some things that should be included in the budget in a responsible way certainly would have been seen by me as being a very progressive way of looking at things, and an inclusive way. People in a minority government are expected to work together in a collegial way, and I think people around the province of Ontario expect us to do that.

What we're seeing is a plan being developed by this side, perhaps in conjunction with the other side, to bring in a plan that brings all of the input we receive from the people of Ontario that are represented by all three parties in this House into something that we can all support. That's unlikely to happen; I understand, Speaker, but I think that's something we should be aiming for. That's something that I think the process should dictate that we work towards.

That being said, Speaker, I'm very proud that we're running the leanest government in Canada. I hope that continues as we move on into the future. As much as the opposition parties would like to change that and have us run perhaps not the leanest government in Canada, I don't think that's what the people of Ontario want. I will not be supporting that motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for further debate, I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot for private members' public business such that Mr. Fraser assumes ballot item number 8, Mr. Qaadri assumes ballot item number 77, Mr. Delaney assumes ballot item number 7 and Mr. Crack assumes ballot item number 12. Thank you.

1510

Further debate.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to rise in debate today to support my colleague Mr. Jim Wilson from Simcoe-Grey on the opposition day motion in his name, to lay out a long-term fiscal plan for more jobs in this province. I think that that really is the heart of this particular piece of legislation before us today.

You know, I listened with great interest to all colleagues of all political parties. Obviously, I am in steadfast agreement with my colleague from Leeds-Grenville as well as Simcoe-Grey. I did hear from my esteemed colleagues in the other two political parties, but I think with respect to their opinion, they are missing the point. We're simply suggesting on this side of the assembly, in the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, that it is imperative that we put forward a fiscal plan to regain those some 330,000 lost jobs in order to also attract a million more. That is really what this is about. This is about looking at the state of our economy in Ontario

today, understanding that we have a significant debt and deficit, which is impacting the way we deliver services in the province, and talking about making sure, in a minority parliament, that we have the plan to move forward.

In fact, it's also an opportunity for us in the opposition to hold this government to account for missed targets. But let us not forget that it is this Liberal government that did make the commitment in the beginning to table budgets in the month of March, and I think that's quite significant.

Before I actually start talking about the fiscal plan put forward by my party and the lack of one put forward by the Liberals, I would like to congratulate my colleague and leader, PC leader Tim Hudak, on the birth of his little girl Maitland and I'd like to congratulate his wife, Debbie Hutton, for making sure that she's—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Who is she? Is she the one who was with Mike Harris?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You know something, Minister? I can't believe you would heckle the leader of the official opposition and his wife on the birth of a child. I have never seen anything more graceless or classless in my life, and I will speak directly to you on that point, because, again, I thought you were better than that.

However, it seems that this is the point of this Liberal government. They have chosen to take politics into the gutter at every opportunity, including not only their attitude in this assembly but also their attitude towards the economy.

We've talked for quite some time in this assembly about the gas plants that were cancelled to save a number of Liberal seats. It cost this province \$1.1 billion. Then we find out just last week that they have withheld documents from the province, that they have a \$4.5-billion hole in their budget. They went to the credit rating agencies and did not provide that information to them, and when it was finally disclosed by my colleague Mr. Vic Fedeli of North Bay—when he disclosed the fact that they said one thing to the credit rating agencies, despite knowing the actual truth, they decided they wanted to censor him. I could not believe that, that a government clinging to power, based on their fiscal record, would try to censor an opposition MPP for doing his job.

Mr. Fedeli has, I think, done a remarkable job in uncovering a number of Liberal scandals. I'm one of the beneficiaries of his great work at the gas plants, because I assumed the role as energy critic for the Ontario Progressive Conservatives. I know first-hand the work that he did to uncover that \$1.1-billion scandal that resulted in five Liberals in the GTA being re-elected, that assisted them in keeping their majority; and now he's uncovered this, a \$4.5-billion hole in their budget.

All we're simply suggesting is, instead of this back-of-a-napkin, rapid-fire-type planning, changing priorities by the day, we actually have some long-term financial objectives in the province of Ontario, something that considers the price of hydro for people and how it's impacting them to live in their home, or how it's impacting manufacturers to keep their jobs. My colleague from

Leeds–Grenville is here; he'll tell you that upstate New York is rapidly, vastly and aggressively trying to take businesses out of his community in Brockville and move them five minutes over a bridge, to the other side of the St. Lawrence River, in order to set up shop there, because of the high price of hydro in Ontario. It's significant.

In fact, yesterday, I had an opportunity to be in Manotick, in Osgoode, in Greely and in Bells Corners to host round tables. It was incredible, hearing from them throughout the pre-budget consultations. Here were their issues. The first issue, of course, was hydro, as I've said. The second issue was taxation. The third issue was the concern over the debt and the deficit, and I pointed out that the third-largest spending priority in Ontario today is servicing the debt and the deficit.

Our debt and deficit are higher in Ontario than in every other province combined in this nation. That, to me, says we have massive and very challenging problems, and that we need a long-term financial plan, particularly for the end of this fiscal year.

That, to me, also says that people in the province are talking about it. They're expecting that their government will take their concerns seriously, that they will put forward a plan that addresses their needs. But that's not happening here, Speaker. That's the opposite of what is happening.

This is a government, as I said, that wants to cling to power. They would do anything in order to stay in power. In fact, they're negotiating right now with the New Democrats for another coalition for the next year, in order for this NDP to continue to prop up the Liberal government. We read about it in the Sun, and we read about it in the Star.

There is an irrefutable fact here, Speaker, that this is a Liberal government that is beholden to both unions and the New Democrats. What shocks me is that the NDP will never stand up and defend the people who would like to see a change in government or at least a chance to have their say on Kathleen Wynne, who, as they said to me yesterday in Osgoode, is the unelected one. They continually said that to me during those points in time. I—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga–Streetsville has a point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, much as I am enjoying the words of my colleague from Nepean–Carleton, I would point out to the Speaker that it is the practice in the House that members are referred to by their office or by their riding and not by their name.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I appreciate the reminder, and you're quite correct. It is preferable, and we encourage members, to speak of other members in the third person, either by their ministerial title or by their riding name.

I'll return to the member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. I certainly appreciate the numerous points of order the member opposite brings forward on a daily basis. I know he's well versed in what the standing orders are.

That said, I would like to speak for a few minutes on the Premier of Ontario, or as they call her in Nepean–Carleton, the unelected one.

They had a convention this past weekend, and during that convention, they had a slogan called “What is leadership” or “What leadership is.” It was quite enjoyable to talk about what leadership is not: gas plants, eHealth, Ornge, hiding a \$4.5-billion hole in your budget, those types of things.

What I thought was actually the most appalling form of leadership I think I’ve seen in this nation was when the sitting Premier of Ontario, who is not elected, decided to attack a political leader who was, while he was standing in probably the most tense forum in his life, defending people who were murdered for protesting for democracy. I’m talking about Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who went to Ukraine, stood in the middle of a bowl that is not much unlike this, where snipers had killed 75 pro-democracy protesters.

Kathleen Wynne—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw. The Premier of Ontario—

Mr. John Yakubuski: Premier Wynne.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Premier Wynne took the opportunity to not only lowball her position, but took the time to attack a Prime Minister who has done, in my opinion, what no other world leader has.

I can tell you something: My husband happened to be in Ukraine with the Prime Minister this past weekend—

Mr. Bob Delaney: A point of order, please.

1520

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A point of order. The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, standing order 23(b) directs the member to direct his or her speech to matters subject to the question under discussion, which the member’s remarks do not. Standing orders 23(h) and (i) ask the member not to make allegations against another member, which she has, and not to impute false or unwounded motives to another member, which she has.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I appreciate the advice, but at the same time, the member from Nepean–Carleton has the floor, and we have allowed some latitude in this debate as members from all sides have made their points. But I would ask and remind all members that, in order for the debate to be relevant, the points that they’re making have to come back to the question at hand and the subject of the motion.

The member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The debate on this is actually confidence in this government. How could anyone in this province have any confidence in the Premier when she doesn’t command respect, given the way she behaves as a leader—or the lack thereof of a leader? I must say—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to point out that this is not a confidence motion that we’re debating right now. It is an opposition day motion. I return to the member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, come on. It says right here “and vote on the motion”—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member for Nepean–Carleton to come to order. She has the floor.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: We’re talking about “not tabled a budget or implemented the ... jobs plan by the end of the fiscal year, the House leaders of the three recognized parties should schedule a debate and vote on the motion of want of confidence....”

There’s a number of reasons we put this forward to talk about the jobs plan and the lack of confidence that this Premier has in the province. I’m simply suggesting that her behaviour this weekend instilled, I think in many people, the fact that she’s unwilling and unable to lead, not only on the jobs crisis in Ontario, but on almost any moral high ground that we have in the province of Ontario. I know that’s uncomfortable for some in this chamber, and that is why they would prefer to put forward points of order and try to stop me from speaking, but I can tell you something: I found her behaviour absolutely 100% appalling. I will stand in my place and I will defend my remarks because I watched what was happening a world away, and her behaviour here on the domestic front was disgraceful.

That is not even the first time this week that she has enacted something internationally that has embarrassed our nation. I think of my question today in question period on the World Trade Organization and how their Green Energy Act has knowingly broken international law. That is this province of Ontario.

Speaker, I will cede my time to my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I had only 10 minutes to speak, and because of the constant interruptions by the government—who weren’t happy only to only muzzle Vic Fedeli; they’ve tried to muzzle me here today too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s once again an honour to be able to stand in this House on behalf of the people of Timiskaming–Cochrane. One of my constituents is right here, Ken Laffrenier. He doesn’t maybe trust what I say, so he’s definitely going to—but anyway.

Levity aside, I think this is an important motion. I think all motions brought forward to the House are important motions and should be treated as such. So I’d like to go through it. “That in the opinion of Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Ontario families need to see a long-term plan for more full-time jobs.” That speaks for itself. Who wouldn’t want more long-term, full-time jobs?

I’d like to digress for a moment: This weekend we had the Liberal convention, and the Premier is now telling us that we need a government with a steady hand to maintain our economy. We went from the transit Premier to the jobs Premier to the education Premier, and now we’re at the Premier of the steady hand. The same steady hand of the government of the last 10 years, the same

steady hand that, two years almost to the day, announced the divestment of ONTC without consulting anyone, without talking to anyone in northern Ontario—that steady hand. The steady hand that we found later, when the Auditor General's report came out, hadn't even looked at the numbers to see if they were going to save any money when they made that divestment. So that is the steady hand we're talking about on the government side.

But let's go back to this motion. If the Liberal government has not tabled a budget, and looking forward, it's by March 31—I take this motion seriously, so I look at how many other budgets have been tabled by March 31, specifically by Her Majesty's loyal opposition. In short-term memory: basically none. So I'm thinking that maybe we'll read a bit further to see if this motion has some substance. If they don't table a budget, they should implement the million jobs plan. So I thought, let's look at the million jobs plan.

I'm trying to take this motion seriously. I'm one of these risky, radical, dairy farmer types, the type that takes all these huge risks. I take a lot of risks when I plant my crop, but we're not known as a risky type of people.

The one I'd like to look at is, in the million jobs plan from the opposition, the schedule under the Electricity Act, 1998, if this was implemented: "The schedule repeals provisions dealing with the feed-in tariff program. If there is a contract to procure energy from a large-scale renewable energy source under the feed-in tariff program, but the renewable energy source has not been connected to the ... grid, the connection cannot be made until the minister under the act consults with the relevant municipality and authorizes the connection." This is how they are going to save money on electricity: basically by saying that if there is a solar farm or a wind turbine farm that's built but not yet connected, they can cancel the contract. The only jobs that's going to create is for lawyers. I thought these guys were at the hearings when we had the gas plant scandal. They're talking about creating the gas plant scandal over and over and over again, like Groundhog Day. Really, these people—I'm amazed. They are so busy talking about the Million Jobs Act that they haven't actually read what they're actually trying to do. Cancelling contracts once they're signed is not going to save the province any money.

So then I look at the risky—the risky—NDP plan, when we're going to merge—

Interjection: With the Liberals.

Mr. John Vanthof: No. We're going to merge our utility companies. We're going to merge—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Something for the people at home: When you're doing a good job, people heckle because they don't want to hear you.

When you merge utility companies, like Hydro One and OPG, "Oh, that won't save much." Yes, it will, because then—and one of the members from the Conservatives likes hydro power, and so do I. He also likes storing electricity with water. It's a really good concept.

If we merge those two companies, we could do that with our own dams.

I've got a dam in my riding, the Lower Notch power dam—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: A hydro dam, the Lower Notch power dam. They would be a perfect site for this. The reason they can't do it is because they're two separate companies, both owned by the public. I asked them, "Why can't we, when hydro is cheap and we're subsidizing power to other jurisdictions, take that water and pump it back up into your reservoir?" His answer shocked me, Speaker; it shocked me. He says, "Because we can't pay the transportation charges and the debt retirement charge. We can't afford to pay the bills." Those two companies belong to the people of Ontario. If we made that one company, we could do things like that—things that make practical sense.

The other two parties are worried that we're risky because we're actually putting forward things that make practical sense. The government spends a lot of time saying how the NDP has no plans, and then—the plans like the Financial Accountability Office, the plan to help youth get experience in their first job. They end up stealing those ones, and then they turn around, "You have no plan." So now they expect us to keep coming up with new ones to keep them going. Well, you know what? It's time they come up with their own ideas, and when they actually come out with a budget, then we will give it the yes or the no. That's the place we are.

1530

But this motion, after I looked at the first two parts of it, basically, that the budget had to be by March 31, when it's never been done before by them; and a part of the Million Jobs Act, which was supposed to save money on electrical costs by giving the minister the ability to cancel contracts for projects that were already built. After I did a bit of research on those, I cannot in good conscience vote for this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, this is a motion that asks the House why it has not implemented a private member's bill that was defeated in this House. Under the rules in the Ontario Legislature, you cannot reintroduce a bill. They can't reintroduce a bill through the front door, so this is, in fact, the back door: trying to reintroduce a bill that failed in the House through an opposition day motion.

Let's start with that. The province is not going to consider a poorly drafted, uncoded, reckless and destructive bill that was presented in this House already; it was debated, it was voted on and it was defeated. In a minority parliament, the private member's bill by the MPP from Niagara West—Glanbrook that would kill hundreds of thousands of jobs was rightly and decisively defeated by a majority of the members in this Legislature.

Out in Ontario, if you're watching this in your kitchen as you're preparing dinner or you're channel surfing as

you pass your afternoon at home, you're probably wondering, "Why is the opposition asking the Ontario Legislature to adopt a bill that has already been before this House and been defeated?" Let's talk about that.

Maybe you followed the implacable hostility to the debate in the United States on their move for more fairness in health care insurance. The US extreme right lost that fight. Common sense would say that they ought to have accepted the judgment of both houses of congress and of the US public, but the US Tea Party Republicans kept on refighting their lost battles, just like Ontario Conservatives want to refight the 2011 election and reintroduce this lost bill. US Tea Party Republicans have tried 50 times to repeal US-style health care. Ontario Conservatives keep trying to fight battles that they have repeatedly lost.

Speaker, I didn't think I'd have a second chance to speak to this already defeated measure that the Ontario PC Party has resurrected through this opposition day motion. I say this with the greatest of respect to my colleagues in the PC caucus. On Wednesday, I'm going to need them to block shots and to back-check in front of me—I'm going to get in a commercial here—when the Ontario Legiskaters play the Ontario Dental Association's hockey team, the Ontario Dentonators.

Listen carefully, Conservatives; we're actually trying to be helpful here. Let me then start with a piece of timeless rural wisdom—and I urge them to adopt it. It goes like this: When the horse has died, dismount. Speaker, their failed private member's bill, to which they refer in this motion, is just such a dead horse. To my esteemed colleagues in the PC caucus: The bill has been defeated. It doesn't work. It is a dead issue.

As Monty Python would say, it is an expired parrot. Let's quote it exactly: "'E's passed on! This parrot is no more! He has ceased to be! 'E's expired and gone to meet 'is maker! 'E's a stiff! Bereft of life, 'e rests in peace! If you hadn't nailed 'im to the perch 'e'd be pushing up the daisies! 'Is metabolic processes are now 'istory! 'E's off the twig! 'E's kicked the bucket, 'e's shuffled off 'is mortal coil, run down the curtain and joined the bleedin' choir invisible! This is an ex-parrot!'"

The bill has lost. The horse is dead. Please dismount. Don't keep introducing this dead parrot act. I say this with respect to my friends opposite.

If Mr. and Mrs. Ontario grasp this subtle point—that the Ontario neo-conservative party has asked the House to adopt a defeated bill and that this motion is likely not going anywhere in this House—now you can safely switch off the television or change channels.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the Minister of Finance coming over to see me just a moment ago. I thought maybe I'd get a date for the budget out of him. No such luck, but he is softening on the issue. He did say, "Sometime before October."

I hear the Minister of Finance continually talking about how this is going to be an aspirational budget, and

the Premier talking about the aspirational budget that's coming up. It's an aspirational government. I'm so tired of hearing about the aspirations of that government. In fact, the place is getting filled with a lot of aspired air.

Speaker, I say to the member from Mississauga—Streetsville that he must have a greater goal when he leaves this place—and we all leave this place. Whether it is voluntarily or involuntarily, or whether they carry us out of here, we leave. This is not forever. He must have a greater wish than to go on the record as the man who raised the most points of order. He's got to have something more here. I'm hoping that someday he'll find his true reason for being here. The fact that he loves to do that—maybe he will avoid interrupting me for my last few minutes here, speaking on this motion today, on behalf of the PC Party.

This motion is to compel the government to adopt a budget before March 31. It is not a stretch. In fact, I want to talk about the government's own record here—a government of which Premier Kathleen Wynne was a senior member.

Starting in 2006, then-Premier Dalton McGuinty and the finance minister made a commitment. They said, "We have come to conclude over the past couple of years that one of the highest priorities for us, as a government, is to ensure confidence from non-government agencies and other governments in the province that the fiscal plan is adopted in a timely fashion."

They made a commitment at that time that every budget thereafter would be tabled before March 31. I'll give you the dates: March 23, 2006; March 22, 2007; March 25, 2008; March 26, 2009; March 25, 2010; March 29, 2011; March 27, 2012—and then, last year, an aberration. I understand that, because they chose a new leader—who has never been elected Premier—who was only sworn in in February.

In fairness to Kathleen Wynne and Charles Sousa, they didn't table a budget prior to the fiscal year. In fact, they did not table it until May 2. While we may be able to justify that last year because of the change in premiership, the change in leadership of the Liberal Party, there is not a single justification for not continuing to uphold the commitment they made in 2006 this year.

Here's the rub, Speaker, as they say: They got caught. Our finance critic, Vic Fedeli, would make one hell of a forensic detective; I can tell you that. He uncovered deliberate falsehoods from this government. They lied to the people of Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member to withdraw his unparliamentary comments.

1540

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw, Speaker. Thank you.

They made statements on the record that the budget going forward would be balanced and that they were on track to balance the budget in 2017-18, and that they would be on track in the interim period. Well, we find out that there is a \$4.5-billion gap. Vic Fedeli dug that all up in documents they secured through the estimates committee.

Now, here's what happened. If you get caught, what you should do is you should say, "You know what? Okay. These are the facts, and we're going to do better." But, no. What does this government do? They don't admit that they gave numbers that weren't the right numbers—I'll say it that way, and I think I can, Speaker—they table a point of privilege motion against the member for Nipissing. So instead of admitting that they've done something wrong, they try to cover it up further—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): First of all, the point of privilege is currently under consideration by the Speaker. I'm obligated to inform the House that it would be better if we weren't talking about it.

Secondly, the word "cover-up" has been declared out of order on a number of occasions. I would ask the member to withdraw that word.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. I do withdraw the word "cover-up." Thank you very much. I withdraw.

So they had the opportunity to say, "Okay, you caught us. We're going to clear the air"—I say to the member from Etobicoke—"We're going to clear the air." But, no. They further try to muddy the waters, hoping that the people won't catch on.

That's part of the reason, because they are so deep in it right now. They are so deep that there is no way on God's green earth that they were going to table a budget before March, because they are hoping against hope that somehow they will be able to just keep this under wraps, maybe even until a deal can be worked out with the third party, to get them through this budgetary cycle. Then maybe there will be no election, and, in the fall, they're hoping people will just have forgotten about it.

I want to pass my congratulations on to Tim Hudak and Deb Hutton on the birth of Maitland. That's a wonderful thing. There's nothing more important than family. But Maitland was born yesterday with a \$20,000 debt, thanks to the Ontario Liberal government, which has doubled our debt in their term of office. I can assure you that the reason they don't want to bring this forth, this budget, is because we know the debt is going up more under this government.

Hospitals, schools, our municipal partners—they need to know what your fiscal condition is. You're hiding it from them. You're not laying it out here. You have a responsibility to do so.

I want to talk about other governments. The government of Canada on February 11 tabled their budget; Alberta, March 6; BC, February 18; Manitoba, March 6; Saskatchewan, March 19; Quebec, February 20; Northwest Territories, February 6; New Brunswick, February 4; Newfoundland and Labrador, it will be tabled on the 27th; and Yukon, it will be tabled tomorrow. What is the problem in Ontario? What have you got to hide? That's the question everyone is asking you.

You made a commitment in 2006. Your Premier was part of that government. Many of you were part of that government. You folks sitting in the front bench were part of that government. What has happened to you?

What has happened to the commitment you made to the people to give the fiscal picture of this province before the end of the fiscal year? It's a responsibility you accepted. You made it your promise.

There are people out there who depend on knowing what is going on in Ontario. The financial markets want to know. The financial markets reacted last week to the fact that you've got a \$4.5-billion fiscal gap that you didn't tell anybody about, even though your own officials told you. Do you not think you have a responsibility to disclose that to the people, to disclose that to businesses, to disclose that to the banks? We live in a financially—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Intertwined.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —intertwined economy. You can't separate one part from the other. When the banks don't know what you are up to, it's a problem for all of us. You people should be ashamed. If you don't have a budget by the 31st of March—I will be voting for this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I will not speak for very, very long this afternoon. I'm sure that folks are eager to dispense, to vote on this particular matter. I don't think it will come as a surprise to my colleagues on the other side of the House who have provided tremendous rhetorical flourish this afternoon as they have spoken about this particular motion—I don't think it will come as a surprise to them to learn that, like my colleagues on this side, I will not be supporting this particular motion.

It's interesting, as I've now been here in my seat for this entire afternoon session, I think, and I have heard virtually every speaker who has stood in their place to discuss this motion. What's interesting to me is that when I hear members of the governing caucus talk about what this really means, I hear a great degree of substance and thoughtfulness going into their comments, as I'm used to hearing. I even hear certain things coming from members of the NDP caucus that could also be similarly described as thoughtful. I don't necessarily agree with everything that I've heard from members of the NDP caucus, but I can understand the perspective they are taking.

What's interesting for me is to listen to members from the caucus from which this particular motion emanates. When I hear them talk—members of the Conservative caucus, that is—it strikes me that their approach on this, like so many other things that they undertake here in this Legislature, revolves around this notion that what they are doing here, what they are here to do on behalf of their constituents, is to actually play a bit of a game. It seems to me that they fundamentally misunderstand what their responsibility is, as individual members but also as a caucus itself, the caucus representing Her Majesty's loyal opposition, as we call it.

I think that's unfortunate. I think, as the member from Oakville said in his very eloquent remarks this afternoon, if the members of the official opposition caucus spent a bit more time rolling up their sleeves and working constructively with every other member, every other caucus, the province would probably be in a stronger position.

But it's not a game when a long-standing party, the Conservative Party here in Ontario, which has quite a tradition, comes forward with proposals that will ultimately mean that core public services that we all rely on, that all of our constituents rely on—if their plan were ever to be adopted, it would result in very, very reckless cuts to those particular services, be they health-care-related, be they education-related, or generally speaking for the economy.

When I think about what it takes to make sure you have a modern province and that you have an economy that continues to rebound and regain steam, I think it's really important to recognize and remember that it's crucial to invest in people, to invest in modern infrastructure and to do what you can as a government to make sure that the business climate is both innovative and dynamic. That's what we undertake to do on this side of the House, and it would be remarkably more helpful for the people of Ontario if members of the official opposition spent less time playing games and more time working constructively towards those kinds of outcomes.

I can think of a number of signature public investments in infrastructure renewal that have taken place in my own community of Vaughan, some very recently. Earlier today, I was at a GO station in my community, in the lovely part of my community known commonly as Maple, and I was echoing an announcement made by the Minister of Transportation last week where he talked about increased service along something known as the Barrie line: more seats on those trains available for commuters in my community, more trains available for morning commutes, in particular, for people who rely on that core crucial public service, that public infrastructure. I know that many, many people in my community will be delighted to know that we continue to invest in GO Transit, \$9 billion since 2003 that we as a government have invested in GO service. That is one example.

Of course, many will know—they have heard me ask questions of the Minister of Health over my 18 months or so in this Legislature about the importance of the Vaughan hospital. Just last week or the week before, Infrastructure Ontario released the request for qualifications, which is, as many know, the first step in the procurement for that Vaughan hospital, something that is extremely crucial for the entire community, not just for Vaughan but residents right across southwest York region.

Back on May 16, Premier Wynne, the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing joined me in my community because, as many will know, in budget 2013 the government of Ontario made a commitment and approved the seven-or-so-kilometre extension to Highway 427. That's an extension to that important highway that will help us leverage tens of thousands of new jobs in that part of York region, that part of the greater Toronto area.

I point to these examples—and there are many, many more, not only from my community, like the Spadina subway extension that's currently being built—and trains will be operating on that line in 2016 because of an \$870-

million provincial investment in York region. I can think of the BRT service that we've invested tens of millions of dollars in as a government to make sure that commuters can move more seamlessly across major routes like Highway 7. There are dozens and dozens and dozens, if not hundreds, of examples like this.

When I look at a motion like the particular one that we're debating today, it reminds me that if members of the official opposition, as I said at the outset, spent a little bit more time working with us constructively, we could take this approach to governing and this approach to building a stronger province and together we could actually make it even more successful. I think it's really unfortunate that here we are again in this place, debating a motion that, as the member from Mississauga—Streetsville said, is very similar to one that has been before us in this House before. It demonstrates, yet again, that there seems to be an unfortunate fascination on the part of the official opposition to play these sorts of games, to stand in their respective places and, unfortunately, be interrupted repeatedly by the Speaker because of the unfortunate tenor of their remarks. They stand up very dramatically—perhaps for the cameras at home; perhaps for some other reasons; I'm not quite sure—instead of doing what they can to constructively lend their voices to helping us and helping members of the NDP caucus build a stronger province. It's unfortunate, but I will say now, after 18 or so months in this Legislature as the member of provincial Parliament for Vaughan, that while it is disappointing, while it continues to be disappointing for me and people in my community to see this performance, it is not surprising.

With that, I will close by saying yet again that I do plan to vote against this motion, and I would ask that even those members of the official opposition take a moment to ponder exactly what they are hoping to do here this afternoon and try their best to work constructively with every other caucus in this place on the importance of moving this province forward. I call on every member from every caucus to vote against this particular motion, Speaker, and I thank you for the time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Wilson has moved opposition day motion number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1553 to 1603.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats. Mr. Wilson has moved opposition day number 3. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Holaday, Douglas C.
Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia

Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Martow, Gila
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed to the motion, please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Duguid, Brad

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John

Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Orazielti, David
Pinuzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 34; the nays are 47.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**VOLUNTARY BLOOD
DONATIONS ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 SUR LE DON
DE SANG VOLONTAIRE**

Ms. Matthews moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to ensure that blood and blood constituents are donated freely / Projet de loi 178, Loi visant à assurer la gratuité du don de sang et de composants sanguins.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. I rise today to speak further to Bill 178.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. If there are to be conversations, I'd ask you to remove them from the House. We are in the middle of debate, and I can't see the minister. I do want to see the minister.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I was saying, I rise today to speak further to Bill 178, our proposed Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014. I would like to thank some people who were here earlier today who have been instrumental in making this happen. Miin Alikhan and Jillian Paul from the ministry and Joshua Tepper and Michelle Rossi from Health Quality Ontario were here earlier today, and I thank them for their contribution to this piece of work.

Members will recall that I introduced this legislation last Thursday. We all recognize that it is designed to address an urgent situation, so I will be limiting my remarks today. I urge the opposition critics to do the same so that this bill can be voted on and sent to committee as quickly as possible.

Many of us in the chamber recall the tainted blood scandal of the 1980s. About 30,000 Canadians were infected with HIV and hepatitis C from tainted blood and blood products. Thousands died as a result. The scandal led to a commission of inquiry led by Justice Horace Krever, whose 1997 report recommended measures to ensure that donors of blood and plasma not be paid except in rare circumstances. The Krever commission also urged that Canada's blood system be unified and administered by a single integrated national blood service. This led to the creation of Canadian Blood Services. Since then, Ontarians and Canadians have been able to take comfort in knowing that we have a safe, centralized, well-managed and voluntary blood donation system with strong quality assurance and oversight measures in place.

1610

However, in 2012, Canadian Plasma Resources, a private for-profit company, applied to Health Canada for a licence to open plasma collection sites in Ontario that would pay people for their plasma for sale on the international market.

I have heard from many health care organizations and individual Ontarians, including tainted-blood victims, who are strongly opposed to private for-profit clinics that would pay donors for their blood or plasma. That's why, in March 2013, I wrote to the federal Minister of Health, because I shared those serious concerns about preserving and protecting the integrity of our national blood system.

Unfortunately, Health Canada has been unwilling to take leadership on this issue. Their view is that it's up to provincial and territorial governments to determine whether a company may provide payment to donors for plasma. So our government is stepping up and taking leadership where the federal government has refused to. I've made it clear, even before the introduction of this legislation, that the Ontario government stands firmly against any business model that would undermine our voluntary blood donation system.

Despite our opposition, the company opened a clinic in downtown Toronto on March 18. The company's CEO has suggested publicly that what they're doing is analogous to the Trillium Gift of Life Network: paying donors for organ transplants.

Let me clear: our Trillium Gift of Life Network does not pay donors for their organs. Trillium's mandate is to save and enhance the lives of Ontarians needing organ or tissue transplants. To help fulfill that mandate, TGLN manages financial assistance programs for eligible patients and donors who are registered with a hospital transplant program. These programs provide reimbursement for specific expenses incurred by transplant donors and recipients, such as transportation, meals and relocation expenses, not for their organs. For anyone to suggest that paying people for plasma is similar to providing expenses for people who are waiting for an organ or donating an organ is simply over the top.

In contrast, these for-profit clinics would compensate donors for plasma that would likely be sold for a hefty profit on the international market to manufacture plasma products for pharmaceutical use. It would not—and I repeat, not—increase the availability or supply of plasma protein products in Ontario.

The CEO of Canadian Plasma Resources has also claimed that they are not paying people for plasma but rather paying people for their time. Again, let me be clear: Our proposed Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014, if passed, would prohibit payment or compensation of any kind to blood and plasma donors. If passed, the act would create prohibitions against, either directly or indirectly, providing payment to any individual in return for giving blood or blood constituents, such as plasma. It would prohibit offering to provide payment to any individual in return for giving blood, and it would create a prohibition against accepting payment in return for the giving of blood.

The act would also provide for inspection and enforcement powers. It would amend the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act to authorize regulations clarifying that the activity of blood and plasma collection must be licensed under that act. It would amend the same act to give the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care the authority to consider the principles set out in the bill we're debating when deciding whether it is in the public interest to issue a licence to a lab or a specimen collection centre.

It would amend the Trillium Gift of Life Network Act, or TGLNA, to clarify that the legality of paying for blood or blood constituents in Ontario would be governed by the proposed legislation and not by TGLNA.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would exempt Canadian Blood Services and its donors to allow Canadian Blood Services to pay donors in rare circumstances. This is in line with the Krever commission.

Speaker, we're proposing these legislative changes because of a regulatory gap at the national level. Federal legislation does not prohibit the remuneration of blood donors, and Health Canada has indicated, as I have said, that it leaves regulation of this matter up to the provinces. Therefore, as a first step, we've already amended regulations to strengthen licensing requirements for laboratories and specimen collection centres, to prohibit paying donors for their blood or blood constituents, including

reimbursement of expenses or other forms of compensation. The proposed legislation would go one vital step further to protect the integrity of our public, voluntary blood donor system.

We're taking these steps to protect the blood system in Ontario, but I want to be clear in my steadfast commitment to our national blood system. I know that Ontarians share my full confidence in the ability of Canadian Blood Services to safely and successfully manage the blood and blood products supply in Ontario and across the country.

Our system works well. Blood plasma can be used as a direct transfusion to treat patients who are bleeding severely or need plasma to help their blood clot. The demand for plasma used in transfusions has been decreasing in Canada, and we're completely self-sufficient in this area. Plasma can also be used to manufacture life-saving drugs called plasma protein products, which are used in a wide variety of circumstances. For example, they can be used to treat fluid loss in burn patients, immune disorders and severe infections, and bleeding disorders such as hemophilia.

Canada does not have the manufacturing capabilities for the large-scale production of plasma protein products, and the Krever commission recommended against Canadian Blood Services owning these production facilities because of the large capital costs involved. Canadian Blood Services manages the supply of plasma protein products in Canada. It does not purchase plasma directly from donors, nor does it purchase raw plasma that is sourced from paid donors. Quite simply, there is no need for a parallel, private, for-profit blood system in Canada. Prohibiting payment for blood or plasma in this province would not negatively impact or reduce the supply or availability of these products for Ontarians. There is no benefit to Ontarians; only a great risk that our current voluntary system could be compromised.

Speaker, our position is very clear. We stand firmly against paid plasma collection. Whether it's paying donors for their time, whether they get cash or gift cards or tax receipts for charitable donations—here in Ontario, if this legislation is passed, any form of remuneration offered or accepted will be prohibited. We are determined to protect the integrity of our voluntary blood donation system. We will not allow any private, for-profit company to undermine the hard-won confidence that our national blood service has rightfully earned.

We have a long history of voluntary donations. They are integral to our universally accessible, publicly funded health care system. Blood is the stuff of life. I urge everyone who is able to donate their blood to do so and save lives. I'm confident that as members we can stand united in our common value of volunteerism to maintain our blood supply.

I wrote to my provincial and territorial counterparts, sharing with them the measures we are taking here in Ontario, and urging them to take a consistent pan-Canadian view to prohibit paid plasma collection anywhere in the country.

I similarly urge all of the members of this House to pass this legislation swiftly. Let's work together to get

this to committee and then bring it forward for third reading as quickly as possible.

I know the member from Nickel Belt is committed to passing this important proposed legislation. I understand the official opposition has also indicated support. I call on both parties to bring this bill to a vote as quickly as possible.

I urge all members to preserve the integrity of our voluntary donation system by supporting our proposed legislative changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, I'm a little concerned about why it took so long for this to come to discussion in the Legislature, seeing as the federal government made these announcements at least a year ago, by my understanding—I don't know.

1620

I'm thinking today about the leader of the PCs and his wife, who just had a baby, and I'm recalling my fourth delivery when it was already available to pay for the storage of the stem cells from the umbilical cord for private use for our family. There are instances where people are able to pay to store products for their own personal use. They can store their eggs. They can pay for a mother to have a surrogate pregnancy; cover her expenses—not to pay for her time, not to pay her a salary, but to cover her expenses.

It is possible that there are some expenses incurred by donating blood, if people have to go to a clinic. It's not something that somebody comes to your house to do. I think that, as Canadians, we all voluntarily want to give blood. I would almost say that we need to have—not just on blood supplies, but we need to look at all aspects of health care from stem cells to blood donations to organ donations, and certainly in our province, there was some criticism that the federal government was passing this on to the province. I believe that oftentimes the provincial leadership is concerned that the federal government is overstepping its bounds and not allowing the province to decide its own fate on these things. The people of Ontario want to be involved in these decisions, and I think we should welcome their involvement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I actually have both a question and a comment. My comment is that my colleague the member from Nickel Belt has raised this issue that the government has acted in a way that has created some uncertainty in our system. They knew very well that this was an issue, but they moved so slowly. My question is: Given the fact that there is another organization that has taken steps, has hired staff, has set up infrastructure, why was this decision made so late in the game? That's my question.

My comment is that we hope that moving forward with decision-making in this province, we act in advance, we act promptly and we don't miss out on opportunities where other people are left expecting a certain climate,

expecting a certain scenario and then they are left out to dry when it changes all of a sudden. I don't think that is a type of policy that is effective in this province. We have to make sure we don't do that as a government, as elected officials. We need to make sure that our steps have foresight so that people can make their decisions in anticipation of what the political climate will be. They can make their decisions knowing what the proposed legislation will be, so that they don't put themselves in a position where they've made significant investments into a particular business model that is no longer relevant. That is something we don't want to do in any sector, whether it's energy, whether it's health care, whether it's education.

I ask the minister, through you, Mr. Speaker: Why didn't we make this decision; why didn't the government come forward with this legislation earlier to have avoided some of the damage that has been created now or some of the difficulties that have arisen now?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I must say, in response to the member from the third party, that I'm not sure why we would blame the Minister of Health when the Minister of Health, in fact, has made it quite clear from the outset of this issue that a private company would require a licence to do what this company has proposed, which is to collect plasma and pay people for it. She has been quite clear that there would be no licence forthcoming. Having ignored the statements of the minister, I'm not sure why this is the minister's fault.

What I would like to say is, going back and commenting on the particular legislation, that I think it's really important for everybody to understand that following the tainted blood scandal, the Krever commission looked at this whole issue very, very carefully, and this legislation is completely consistent with the recommendations of the Krever commission that we have a voluntary blood collection system and, by extension, a voluntary plasma collection system here in Canada, and in Ontario, obviously.

I think it's unfortunate that the federal Minister of Health has declined to have a federal ruling. But given that the federal Minister of Health has declined to have a Canadian rule in this respect, outlawing paying for the collection of plasma or blood, I think it's very important that our Ontario Minister of Health is taking that action in the legislation that has been tabled here today.

I hope this is one of those occasions when all three parties can vote quickly to do what I suspect we're all in agreement on and which is totally consistent with the Krever commission as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Bill Walker: My situation in this case is that it should always be safety first with anything that's going forward. I have friends and family who have received blood transfusions, and I certainly want to make sure that that's the priority of anyone going forward.

I'd like to commend those people. I'm a proud blood donor. I commend the blood donors, the volunteers and certainly Canadian Blood Services, which provides those services out in all of our communities across our great province—and a little shout-out to Jim Moyer from my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who in the last year was over 250 donations of blood. I think that's just phenomenal that he's out there helping other people in their time of need.

The Minister of Education asked a question of my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton as to why we would be blaming or faulting the Minister of Health. What I would add to that is it's one of those situations, again, of the talk and the rhetoric of partnership and working together. It seems that it has been awfully delayed. Why weren't we consulted? Why weren't we part of the process? Why weren't we given the opportunity to at least be made aware of it?

I have had a couple of circumstances in my own backyard that—again, I'm the last, it seems, to know about issues that are affecting my riding, not just in health care—I'm not pointing directly to the minister in this case, but to other ministers within her cabinet. Certainly, last week was a prime example, where money was given out in my riding, and I'm certainly thankful for that, but I wasn't even made aware of it. I think the courtesy is to bring us in. If you really want partnership, bring us to the table and let us know about that.

I'm very concerned about the delay. I think it has an image issue with regard to other businesses, if they're thinking, "We're coming to Ontario, and we're going to have to wait a year," and then all of a sudden there are roadblocks put up.

I will, with the minister in the House, bring up the Markdale hospital. There has been a delay of over 10 years. I have been here for two and a half years. I keep waiting for the yes. Minister, I know you're working diligently on it, and I can't wait for the Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound folks to hear you say, "Yes, we in fact will give you money to build that very needed hospital that I committed to 10 years ago in this very House."

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to my colleague from Whitby–Oshawa, Christine Elliott, bringing a good, sound thought process to this. I look forward to hearing what she has to say on the topic and know that you will find it interesting as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Health has two minutes to reply.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to thank the members from Thornhill, Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Guelph and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for their contribution.

I must say I find it very concerning that the member from Thornhill would equate paying for plasma to paying to have your eggs stored. That is a completely different conversation. I look forward to making sure everybody understands exactly what it is we're talking about.

I think it's important to note that, yes, the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is celebrating donors.

Absolutely, that's what we need to do more of. Thank you for that contribution.

I know that this is an issue that has been raised—and we have had conversations with all parties—of why we are doing this now. We told the company—and I think it's important you understand that the company has known for many, many, many months—that they need a licence to operate in Ontario. They have found what they believe is a loophole. We are closing that loophole, if indeed it exists. But no one should be feeling sorry for that company. They have known for a long time that I would not approve a licence for a paid plasma centre. The company deserves no sympathy from anyone in this House. They have known; they went ahead anyway. We're going to make sure that we protect voluntary donation here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to stand as the PC health critic today to speak to Bill 178, An Act to ensure that blood and blood constituents are donated freely, or by its short title, the Voluntary Blood Donations Act.

1630

Bill 178 was only tabled last week by the Minister of Health, so we've not yet had the opportunity to present this act to our caucus. However, I have had the opportunity to meet with some of the affected stakeholders and wish to offer some preliminary comments.

It has been noted that this is an issue that has been outstanding for well over a year. An application for a licence to collect plasma from paid donors was submitted by Canadian Plasma Resources to Health Canada in November 2012. They are currently preparing to open three locations: two in downtown Toronto and one in Hamilton. I understand that in excess of \$7 million has already been invested into this business, 25 employees have been hired and testing of the system has commenced.

The minister knew this was happening and has indicated that we shouldn't have any sympathy for the company. Perhaps that's true, but the fact of the matter is that no action was taken by the minister. Now that we're faced with the distinct possibility that a licence will be granted by Health Canada within the next two to three months, we're now faced with somewhat of an emergency—certainly a very urgent situation—and the need to make a decision in haste rather than having the important public policy discussion that an issue of this magnitude deserves.

There are important considerations respecting paid plasma donation that need to be raised, and I hope that sufficient time will be allowed, once Bill 178 reaches committee, to allow for all affected stakeholders and members of the public to be heard. In the meantime, I appreciate the opportunity to raise a number of these considerations during the hour of time allotted to me.

Bill 178 would prohibit payments to individuals for their blood and plasma, including reimbursement of ex-

penses or other forms of compensation, except for exceptional circumstances deemed necessary by Canadian Blood Services. It would also prohibit individuals from accepting payment for blood and plasma in Ontario. The legislation would also require that all laboratories and specimen collection centres be licensed under the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act.

To understand Bill 178 and what it aims to accomplish, it's important to understand, first of all, what we're actually talking about and what plasma is. Plasma is the pale yellow-coloured liquid that makes up about 55% of total blood volume. Plasma can be obtained from either a regular whole-blood donation or through a process called plasmapheresis where the blood is returned to the donor. Through this procedure, blood is collected through the machine where the plasma is separated out and the remainder of the blood cells—red cells, white cells and platelets—are returned to the donor.

It is so valuable for so many purposes that it's sometimes referred to as "liquid gold." Plasma can be used as a direct transfusion to treat patients who are bleeding severely or need plasma to help their blood clot. Plasma can also be used to manufacture plasma protein products. One of these products, known as IVIG, shows early promise of success with Alzheimer's disease, so demand for it is expected to soar in the next few years. Once blood is collected, fractionation occurs, which is the processing of source plasma into a range of specialized proteins for therapeutic use. Fractionated products would include albumin, which is used for volume replacement during surgery or following massive bleeding, and immunoglobulins for the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases and immune disorders.

It's important to note that Bill 178 does not deal with transfusions when speaking about compensating donors for plasma. The current issue is whether the company can collect plasma from paid donors to sell to companies that use the plasma for pharmaceutical purposes.

It has been the case in Canada for many years that we do not collect enough plasma to be self-sufficient. We are self-sufficient when it comes to fresh plasma used for transfusions. However, we buy the rest of our plasma from the United States, where, in many cases, they purchase plasma from donors.

In April 2013, Health Canada held a round table in Toronto on the whole issue of payment for plasma. During the April 10, 2013, round table, a presentation was made by Canadian Blood Services. I would like to read an excerpt of the report issued by Health Canada—the preliminary report. The presentation was made by Dr. Graham Sher, CEO of Canadian Blood Services, who stated "that the Canadian Blood Services currently purchases bulk pharmaceutical products from the US and Europe that are made from plasma (e.g. plasma protein products such as albumin and IVIG) on behalf of the provincial and territorial governments for use in Canadian hospitals. These products are made from several plasma sources, including volunteer donors in Canada and the US, and paid donors in the US. He emphasized

that, internationally, the use of paid plasma creating plasma protein products has been a common practice within the pharmaceutical industry for decades, and that the majority of the world's supply of plasma products comes from paid donors sourced by the plasma industry." Later, Dr. Sher stated that "between 600,000 and 700,000 litres of plasma for fractionation per year would be required for Canada to become self-sufficient and meet today's demand, and that collection of this amount of plasma with a volunteer model is not operationally or economically feasible."

So it is clear that Canada's need for plasma products significantly exceeds our current capacity to produce plasma for further manufacturing into plasma protein products. Approximately 70% of plasma products used in Canada for these products are currently made from US-sourced plasma largely collected from paid donors.

Canadian Plasma Resources, the company in question, proposes to address this issue, but of course there isn't a simple or straightforward answer. In order to conduct a proper review, I believe it's necessary to look back at the history of blood collection services in Canada, and the report of the Krever commission on this subject. The minister referenced this in her comments as well.

Blood collection was, for many years in Canada, the responsibility of the Canadian Red Cross. From the 1940s to the 1990s, the Red Cross was responsible for the Canadian blood supply through voluntary donations. The sole exception was the Cangene facility in Winnipeg, which compensated donors for a rare type of blood, Rh-negative, which produces antibodies for a life-saving immune globulin medication. That is certainly an exception to the general rule, by far.

In the early 1980s, 2,000 Canadians were infected with HIV by tainted blood products. As many as 30,000 more were infected with hepatitis C. It's estimated that nearly 8,000 of those who received bad blood are expected to die as a result. How could this have happened? Well, facing a blood shortage and weighing the pros and cons, Health Canada and the Canadian Red Cross turned to the international market to purchase blood products for Canadians. Some of these blood products were purchased from blood brokers, whose supplies came from high-risk populations such as Arkansas prisons, LA's skid row, the San Francisco area, and Russian funeral homes.

Remember that the 1980s were the height of the AIDS epidemic in North America, and this imported blood was being inadequately screened before entering our system. Moreover, the Red Cross was slow to introduce donor screening methods domestically.

In 1993, following intense pressure by the victims of tainted blood, the Privy Council issued an order calling for a royal commission of inquiry on the blood system in Canada, which was headed by Justice Horace Krever. Better known as the Krever inquiry, this commission was set up to investigate the claim that the system of government, private and non-governmental organizations responsible for supplying blood and blood products to the health care system in Canada, had allowed tainted blood

to be used. After months of hearings and four years of investigations, Justice Krever released his landmark report of 1,200 pages in 1997.

Justice Krever emphasized in his report that the blame for this nationwide public health catastrophe did not simply lie with the Red Cross. Fundamentally, he found that the relationship between the Red Cross and the federal and provincial governments was dysfunctional, and that Canada lacked a cohesive national blood policy. This lack of policy resulted in a series of disastrous decisions. These included the importing of plasma collected from high-risk populations, not using a test that may have caught as many as 90% of the hepatitis C cases, delaying the purchase of safer heat-treated blood products for haemophiliacs out of a desire to use up all of the contaminated blood products, and a failure to track down those who might have been infected.

As a result of the Krever report, the control of the blood program was taken away from the Canadian Red Cross, and a new federal agency, Canadian Blood Services, was established to operate at arm's-length from the government. Although the federal government was quick to offer compensation to Canadians infected with HIV, with the first package being offered in 1989, it took much longer and several legal battles before all Canadians infected with hepatitis C were compensated. The total payout was in the billions of dollars.

1640

The recommendations of the Krever report ultimately overhauled the blood system in Canada, making it safer and better, but at the end of the day, nothing makes up for the fact that so many Canadians had to be infected in order for us to realize drastic changes were necessary in our blood system.

What came out of this inquiry and this devastating scandal was a key recommendation of the Krever report: Blood donors should not be paid for their services except in rare circumstances, which brings us directly to the issue at hand here in Ontario and to our discussions about Bill 178, An Act to ensure that blood and blood constituents are donated freely.

Following the Krever inquiry, Justice Krever outlined the basic principles of the Canadian blood supply system. Those five basic principles are, first, that blood is a public resource. This value must guide the blood supply system, as voluntary donors are doing it for the benefit of other persons in Canada and not for any other motivations. For this reason, profits should not be made from donated blood, and the operator of the blood system should act as a trustee of this valuable public resource.

I, too, would like to add—the thousands of people in Canada who donate freely of their blood. We've heard of some of those donors from my colleague the member from—

Interjection: Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: —Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Thank you for that.

I'd also like to say that in my own riding, we've had a great history of voluntary blood donations, and people

have given at record levels. Certainly in my own family, my mother was a volunteer for many, many years at the voluntary blood clinics, so we know how important they are and how much we value the donations that are given voluntarily by Canadians.

The second principle is that donors of blood and plasma should not be paid for their donations except in rare circumstances. It was Justice Krever's argument that unpaid donations of blood and plasma are safer than blood and plasma donations from paid donors. This principle is in line with the World Health Organization recommendation that blood components and blood products be made from donations from unpaid donors.

The motivation behind this recommendation is the belief that well-informed, altruistic donors will not donate if there is a possibility their donations will do harm rather than good, since they have no motivation besides goodwill for donating in the first place. On the other hand, there is concern that people who receive money in exchange for donations might still donate even if they think they should not. So it's only in rare circumstances that individuals should be compensated for the collection of blood products.

The third principle is that whole blood, plasma and platelets must be collected in sufficient quantities in Canada to meet domestic needs for blood components and blood products. Currently, Canadian donations meet the need for blood components, but we are not self-sufficient for blood products. Most of the shortage in blood products is made up for by plasma collected from people in other countries, who are paid.

But the Krever report suggests that self-sufficiency in blood products is also a desirable goal. This is because the plasma obtained from Canadians will be safer, in relative terms. Canada has lower rates of infectious diseases than many other countries, including parts of the US, and Canadians have access to covered health care services. When plasma is collected domestically, it is overseen and regulated by the health protection branch, so we have domestic control over both the quality of donor screening and the collection and processing of plasma. The other advantage of being self-sufficient in blood products is that the supply will not be affected by shortages on the global market.

The fourth principle is that Canadians should have free and universal access to blood components and blood products. This, of course, is in keeping with the principles governing health care in Canada, including universality and accessibility. This goal is not difficult to achieve for blood products and components used in hospitals, because all drugs used in hospitals are covered. But more importantly, this principle emphasizes that blood components and products used outside of hospitals should continue to be distributed free of charge, as in the past.

The fifth and final principle is that the safety of the blood supply system is paramount. The number one goal of the blood system must be to supply safe therapies to people who need them, and this principle must come above all other principles and policies.

To prevent another tainted blood scandal, we must ensure that we only accept the best possible blood. To ensure the safety of recipients, donors undergo an extensive screening process. As a result of the Krever commission, Canadian Blood Services was established to replace the Canadian Red Cross blood program and the Canadian Blood Agency, as I mentioned earlier. It took over the responsibility in 1998 to manage the blood and blood products supply for Canadians in all of the provinces and territories outside of Quebec, which is served by Héma-Québec.

While Canadian Blood Services is not a governmental agency, it is a national not-for-profit organization that receives funding from the provincial and federal governments and is regulated by Health Canada. The main service they offer is whole-blood collection, but they oversee a variety of other services, which vary between provinces but generally include plasma collection, platelet collection and stem cell and bone marrow collection and matching.

Whole blood is made up of red blood cells, white blood cells, platelets and plasma. Some of what is donated is kept as whole blood and used for transfusions, and some is processed to separate out red blood cells and plasma. These donations also undergo a process where white blood cells are removed, since it is white blood cells that often carry viruses and bacteria that can be harmful to the recipient.

People can also donate plasma, which is the part of the blood that transports water and nutrients to all the cells in the body. It contains many antibodies that help fight infections and is used to make life-saving products such as some cancer treatments. The donor's blood is processed so that only plasma is extracted and the rest of the blood returns to the donor. Plasma can then either be transfused to a recipient or processed into other blood products such as pharmaceutical drugs to treat Canadians with immune deficiencies.

In much the same way as with plasma donation, donors can also donate platelets. But Canadian Blood Services did not get enough supplies for the blood system from Canadian donors alone. Although they do collect enough domestically for Canadian transfusions, Canadian Blood Services uses the international market to fill their demand for manufactured blood products. More specifically and related to the issue we're discussing today, they currently only collect 30% of the plasma needed to manufacture the drugs for Canadians with immune deficiencies. The other 70% of the plasma made for these drugs comes in part from paid donors in the United States.

Much of the discussion and outcome of the Krever commission is about Canada's voluntary blood supply. Canadian Blood Services, with the help of staff and many volunteers, is able to get volunteers to donate their time and blood for a good cause. With their "It's in you to give" campaign, they are able to hold countless donation clinics across the province and Canada.

It should also be noted that payment by a private company for plasma donations has never and will never

have any impact on Canada's voluntary system for collecting blood for transfusions. Only Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec collect blood and plasma for transfusion. Private companies in Canada do not collect blood or plasma for transfusion. It still remains completely voluntary, and that is not going to change with Bill 178.

On February 25, 2013, Canadian Blood Services announced that they had no plans to purchase plasma from Canadian Plasma Resources. Canadian Blood Services stated:

"All plasma that Canadian Blood Services collects in Canada is used in Canada and all plasma for transfusion comes from volunteer Canadian donors.

"On behalf of Canadian hospitals, we bulk-buy pharmaceutical products from the US and Europe that are made from plasma (plasma protein products such as albumin and IVIG). These products are made from a few plasma sources: (a) volunteer donors in Canada, (b) volunteer donors in the US, and (c) paid donors in the US.

"This is not new and has been a common practice for decades. It is safe, it reduces health care costs, and is acceptable to patient groups who use these products and recognize this practice ensures security of supply....

"Canada, the United States and Europe have strict standards in collecting plasma and manufacturing it into pharmaceutical products. That means all donors must meet specific criteria to be eligible, and their donations are thoroughly tested. In addition, manufacturers use technology that wipes out viruses as an added safeguard for patients. Most of the products we buy are sold worldwide and are subject to regulation and licensing in multiple countries, including Canada.

"We are confident that there are enough Canadians who want to give blood, plasma and platelets for altruistic reasons, rather than for payment or incentives to meet the needs of our voluntary system.

"Canadian Blood Services has no plans to purchase plasma from the new Toronto operation."

1650

Mr. Speaker, Canadian Blood Services have done a fantastic job of ensuring that donations collected have been safe. All of the 850,000 units of blood collected annually are tested for transmittable diseases, and there is a rigorous process for screening donors. Canadian Blood Services has an extensive questionnaire that aims to ensure safe collection from donors. Questions are asked about travel, relationship history, locations lived, medications and vaccines given, medical history and extensive other points of information. Moreover, they monitor closely the infectious disease rate and donations and do "horizon scans" for potential emerging pathogens that may pose a new risk to the blood system in the future.

Now, I would like to say just a few points about what others have said about Bill 178, in hopes of ensuring that we have a balanced discussion on this subject.

I have had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the subject company, Canadian Plasma Resources, and they have outlined their concern, obviously, over

the proposed legislation. They have stated that they believe they can safely collect plasma in Ontario that would not affect our voluntary blood donation system. This organization has said that they will be compensating donors for their time with either a gift card or a donation to a select charity. They have stated that this will solely be for the donor's time and not a payment for plasma. Moreover, no compensation would be made until at least two donations of plasma have been tested to be safe.

We've also heard from the Canadian Hemophilia Society. The Canadian Hemophilia Society's blood safety and supply committee has approved a policy on paid plasma donations. The CHS has cited that "80% of the Canadian and world supplies of plasma derived-products are manufactured from the plasma of paid donors," mainly from the United States. The Canadian Hemophilia Society took the following position:

"(1) Plasma-derived products in adequate supply from both paid and non-paid sources are essential to the health of thousands of Canadians and, indeed, hundreds of thousands of people around the world;

"(2) Plasma-derived products manufactured following standard operating procedures and good manufacturing practices are of equally high quality from both paid and non-paid donors;

"(3) The collection of source plasma from paid donors in a properly regulated environment is not a patient safety issue;

"(4) CBS"—Canadian Blood Services—"and Héma-Québec should make all reasonable efforts to increase the quantity of Canadian plasma for fractionation from non-paid donors and the number and quantity of plasma-derived products made from this plasma;

"(5) In the absence of any realistic strategy to significantly increase the Canadian contribution to the world supply from non-paid donations, and when Canada relies almost entirely on paid donors from the US for life-saving plasma-derived products, it is not defensible to reject paid donor practices on ethical grounds;

"(6) Any endeavour to collect plasma for plasma-derived products from paid donors in Canada must respect the highest regulatory standards. Health Canada should make these standards known to Canadians and report to Canadians on a regular basis the results of their collection site inspections, including transfusion-transmissible infection rates among donors. CHS will monitor and endeavour to hold the regulator to account;

"(7) Any endeavour to collect plasma for plasma-derived products from paid donors must not affect the ability of Canadian Blood Services or Héma-Québec to collect whole blood, platelets and plasma from non-paid donors to meet the needs for fresh blood components. Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec should report to Canadians on a regular basis the impact of paid plasma collections on their ability to meet the needs of Canadian patients;

"(8) The health of donors should not be compromised by their donations, paid or non-paid. Donors should not be exploited by any individual or organization. Measures

and initiatives taken to encourage blood and plasma donations should not overwhelm the capacity of the donor to make an informed decision about whether to donate;" and, finally

"(9) Patients whose continued health is dependent on the use of blood components or plasma-derived products have a right, through their representative organizations, to be consulted on any issue which may have an impact on the safety, efficacy or supply of the treatment they receive. Health authorities should ensure that robust mechanisms are in place to ensure that this happens."

The use of plasma for those living with hemophilia is life-saving in many cases. Hemophilia patients require factor replacement therapy, where plasma is injected to allow the blood to clot. People living with hemophilia are one of the biggest users, of course, of plasma in Canada.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, it's quite obvious that this is a complex issue and one that requires careful thought and consideration. We need to send this bill to committee, where we can hear from Canadian Plasma Resources, Canadian Blood Services, the Canadian Hemophilia Society and public groups and individuals who are affected by blood services or require use of plasma products.

Others have come to the same conclusion. The extensive Health Canada round table held last April revealed that compensating donors for plasma is not an easy decision. It is something that we need to have a debate about in Ontario and hear all the facts from relevant groups.

The conclusion of the Health Canada round table stated that "Several participants pointed to Justice Krever's recommendation that Canada maintain an open and transparent blood system and consult with the public before changing the volunteer system. Because it was felt this is a public policy issue that impacts all Canadians, there was a recommendation for a cross-country public consultation on the matter. Patients that use plasma products were identified as a key stakeholder group that must be consulted on this issue, as they are the ones that are familiar with safety issues and most concerned with security of supply."

The report then went on to state, "This is not an easy discussion. Many stakeholders are passionate about this issue for various reasons. Everyone shares a common goal of wanting to ensure an ongoing safe system in Canada."

There is much at stake here, Mr. Speaker. The safety and sufficiency of our blood supply is important to all of us, and I trust that we will have an opportunity to hear all of the facts before making a decision.

But I have to stress—and I have been listening to what the Minister of Health has indicated—that this does not need to take a long time. We certainly do not intend to impede the progress of this bill. We are very aware of the time constraints relating to the possible licensing of this company by Health Canada, and we want to make sure that we deal with this in a timely fashion. But it is important for so many people that we get this matter straight.

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on this important issue today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Well, Speaker, I never thought I would be standing in the Legislature and debating whether or not we would be paying for a blood resource that's very precious to humanity and life.

I thank the member from Whitby-Oshawa for the information she provided and the history on this issue.

I think one of the things we do have to ask ourselves is, why the delay in this? I know the minister wrote a letter to the federal government in March 2013. I wish you would have acted sooner. I know you want to rush the bill through, and I know the reasons why; they're very serious reasons. But I hope that if this bill gets rushed through, it will actually have an impact on what we're trying to accomplish here and that this private business, Canadian Plasma Resources, won't fall through the cracks.

I'm at a loss for words in this regard. This is a topic, really, that truly upsets me, to be honest with you. When you're talking about health care, public health care and life, it's something that we have to really take seriously in this House.

So I only hope we haven't acted too late on this and that this business doesn't slip through the cracks and set a standard that Canadians don't want to follow, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do want to say thank you very much to the opposition critic for her remarks. It's clear that she has given this a lot of thought. It was a thoughtful speech. She thoroughly reviewed our too-recent history when it comes to dangers associated with blood supply in this province.

I want to say thank you to the member opposite for acknowledging that this is something that we do want to deal with quickly and respond to this particular situation that we're dealing with now. Again, thank you.

1700

I think you taught us a lot about the history of blood, what plasma is and what the Krever commission did recommend. I'm pleased that I think I heard, through all of that, that you are supportive of protecting the voluntary donation system, and I look forward to taking this to the next step, by getting this bill passed as quickly as we can.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to sit and listen to our member from Whitby-Oshawa, our health critic and deputy leader, Christine Elliott. As the Minister of Health just said, it was a very thoughtful, informative presentation. I certainly learned a lot through that debate. As Christine has said, it's a very complex issue. There needs to be balance in our decision, at the end of the day. There needs to be a timely review of this.

Obviously, there is a very big debate between "paid" and "volunteer," and again I commend all of those people

who step up. As the slogan goes, "It's in you to give," so those people who do, in fact, step up and give blood for the benefit of others, that's a wonderful thing.

I think what she really emphasized was the need to consult with stakeholders, particularly those who are going to benefit or have a definite need for a blood transfusion. I think it's absolutely critical that those people are involved in any of these types of discussions.

A number of people have raised the same issue, the concern that most people are expressing today in the House: the delay. A letter was written by the minister over a year ago. Today, really, is the first time many of us have heard about it or had the opportunity. In our case, we haven't been able to caucus it, and I think it's very important that all of our caucus members have the ability to bring their stories and their thought processes forward. That certainly helps me to inform how I look at any issue that's on the docket. It would have been nice to have had that time. It would have been nice to be able to do some research before today. I think it's one of those things that, certainly from the minister's perspective—again, she always talks about partnership and collaboration with the opposition and the third party, and I think we all should be and are all willing to do that when we've had ample time to truly do our due diligence on behalf of the people who have sent us here, our constituents.

The health and safety of people is absolutely paramount—I say that every time I'm in the House; to ensure the safety of those people I represent is absolutely my priority. I will do the same due diligence here. I would certainly like to know more about this topic and look forward to more debate, getting it through and coming up with a good decision on behalf of the people of this great province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I also have to say that I want to applaud the member from Whitby-Oshawa for her very thorough analysis and presentation of this issue and of this bill.

I want to begin by highlighting some of the important issues that were raised. I think that the concept of the security of supply—that safety is of the utmost importance. I can share a personal story of a very near and dear friend of mine; her mother received a blood transfusion just prior to the birth of her daughter. Her daughter is my good friend, and she contracted hepatitis C as a result. We know many difficult stories like that have happened in our province. The notion of a voluntary system and the notion of having a mechanism in place, the idea of encouraging, as part of our civic duty, to give back to our community by donating blood—those are very valuable notions and very valuable ideas, and I think the member touched upon those very thoroughly.

She particularly gave emphasis to the history of what we've gone through, and it's important, in respect to the availability of plasma or plasma-related resources, that we look at what has happened in our past so that we can prevent that from happening in our future, looking at

some of the serious mistakes that have been made, some of the mechanisms that were not present that could have insulated us from some of the serious and very heart-breaking stories and devastating results of not having a secure blood supply.

I particularly think it's important to notice that the member from Whitby–Oshawa raised this issue: There is a question of our serenity as Ontarians and Canadians when we are relying on outside sources for blood, particularly when those sources that we rely upon are paid. It raises a question about where our moral compass and moral standing are to make these types of decisions. I think we need to have a broad picture and a thorough analysis of where we go from here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Whitby–Oshawa has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would like to thank the member from London–Fanshawe for her comments, as well as the Minister of Health, the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

The member from London–Fanshawe—I really appreciated her comments and her genuine concern about this issue, because it is important to so many people, and we've gone through such a tragedy in Canada. We need to learn from our mistakes and be very careful as we go forward and as we make any decisions relating to our blood supply.

I thank the minister for her understanding in realizing that we want to be part of the solution here, not part of the problem. This is an issue that is time-sensitive, and we want to proceed with it as quickly as possible while still having a thorough review of the situation.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound also talked about the safety and security of the blood supply. That is something that we need to strengthen and, hopefully, look toward becoming more self-sufficient on with respect to plasma production and collection in the future.

Then the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton talked about the importance of understanding the history, where we've come from and where we're going—so that should be our guide going forward—and the principle that so many Ontarians and Canadians hold dear, that giving blood is one of the things that make us Canadian, that people want to give altruistically. We've got a very proud history of that. We certainly don't want that to be compromised in any way.

I think we really need to understand, if we start paying donors for plasma donations, what effect that's going to have on our voluntary blood donation system. I look forward to getting this matter into committee as quickly as possible so that we can come out with a bill that is soundly reasoned and is ready to go to protect our blood supply as much as can be done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I guess it's my turn to add a few words to this debate. I sincerely wish that I was not

having this debate at this time. This is March 24, 2014, and we have known really since 2012 that this company, Canadian Plasma Resources, had intentions of opening up a private for-profit clinic in downtown Toronto. Actually, back in November of 2012, they were talking about three paid-for-donation plasma clinics in Ontario, two in Toronto and one in Hamilton.

Since November of 2012, the Ministry of Health has had so many opportunities to act, but none of those opportunities were acted upon. Time went by. Days turned into weeks that turned into months that turned into years. Now here we are in Ontario; we can walk 10 minutes, and we will be in downtown Toronto at 82 Adelaide, at a paid-for-donation plasma clinic, fully open with all of the bells and whistles as to what you need to do that kind of work.

How did this happen? Why are we in this situation? How can I rewind the time and tell the minister that back in 2012 was the time to act, not in March 2014. But of course, none of us can travel in time. Not even you, Speaker, in that big chair. None of us can do that. We have to take it from where we are now.

We have all known since 2012 that a commercial company called Canadian Plasma Resources applied to Health Canada for a licence to open two plasma collection sites in downtown Toronto, and at the time there was talk of a third one in Hamilton. Right there, back in 2012, Canadian Plasma Resources was really upfront in indicating that they would pay their donors. At the time, in 2012, they told us about a \$20 payment for donation. This amount has now been upped to \$25 per donation. But it doesn't change the basic fact that they were upfront in telling us what they were going to do.

1710

First, they went to Health Canada. Health Canada decided to consult on this issue. They held a round-table discussion on April 10, 2013, right here in Toronto, with about 30 people. It was an invitation-only type of consultation, which in my books never really sits that well, but we'll pass on this. The consultation took place in Toronto. Thirty people who had been invited attended. Representatives from the Ministry of Health were there. Patient advocate groups were there. Health organizations, individual advocates, and Health Canada, of course, were there. Canadian Blood Services was there. Héma-Québec was there. They talked about this issue, that we had been approached by a commercial company to start collecting plasma in Toronto for a commercial venture.

Health Canada produced a summary report. The summary report has been available on their website since July 26 of last year. On July 26, 2013, Health Canada posted the report, as well as some backgrounders as to what this was all about. They opened it up for comments, and pretty much anybody and everybody who wanted to comment on their report was free to do so. The whole thing was wrapped up by August of last year.

You have to remember that the Ministry of Health has quite a few resources to follow this file, but so did I. I followed this file because I knew the damage it could do

to our health care system if that was allowed to happen. Anybody who followed the file would have been able to see the conclusions from Health Canada. Let me read it: "There is no federal legislation that prohibits an establishment that collects blood or plasma from compensating donors. Compensation of donors falls within the authority of the" provincial or territorial "governments." If that's not a call to act, Mr. Speaker, how much clearer can we spit this out than what Health Canada had put on their website?

They made it clear: "Don't wait on us. We think"—as in, Health Canada thinks—"that there is nothing the Canadian government has to do." If a commercial entity decides that they want to pay their donor, that's fine with them. "If the province doesn't think so, then do your work, province, because Health Canada has spoken." They spoke clearly, concisely and were easily understood. They saw nothing wrong with compensation for donors, and they said clearly that this falls within the authority of the provincial government, i.e., this Ministry of Health sitting right here, for which I'm the critic.

The minister has known from the get-go that the federal government was not going to prevent a clinic from opening and that it was quite fine with them to allow donors to be paid for their plasma. So I'm always a little bit surprised when I hear the Minister of Health blaming their federal counterpart.

Do I agree with what Health Canada has said? Absolutely not. I disagree 100% with the position of Health Canada, but that doesn't mean that their position was not clear. Their position was really clear. They said that it is okay to have a commercial entity pay for donors. "If you don't want this in your province, then, province, you will have to act."

Quebec didn't wait till there was somebody knocking on the door, saying, "By the way, I'm opening up a paid-donor plasma clinic down the road from your Legislature and I intend to open quite a few more of those."

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Franchise.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, franchise them out; exactly. They acted. And years ago, they made it clear, before it was even thought of, that they were going to uphold the principle that we had learned when the Krever commission was in full swing.

I know that a lot of people will remember. A lot of people have lost family members. A lot of people still live with family members or friends who were infected by the tainted blood scandal that hit us. That's why we had the Krever commission, and that's why we looked at what can we do so that it never happens again?

Governments of all provinces and territories and the federal government stood together behind Justice Krever and made a promise to those families, they made a promise to those victims and they made a promise to the survivors, that this would never happen again, that we had learned from what had happened, that we had learned from this tragedy that affected 30,000 Canadians, and that we were going to move forward in a way that would make sure that our blood system was going to be secure.

What were those five principles? They were quite reasonable. The first one was that blood is a public resource; we all need it to live.

The second was that donors should not be paid. Could it be any clearer? They certainly don't speak like politicians, those people, do they? When they say something, they mean exactly what they say. Principle number two: To make sure that the Canadian blood supply stays safe, donors should not be paid. That was enough to get the government of Quebec to act and pass legislation that made it quite clear that in their province, you are not allowed to pay. In our province, that was not enough for our government to act.

Principle number three: Sufficient blood should be collected so that importations from other countries are unnecessary. This is an issue that has been brought forward a number of times during this debate, the fact that Ontario imports some medications and different therapeutic agents that are made from plasma from other countries.

I want to make a parallel to the Trillium Gift of Life. When the Trillium Gift of Life wanted more donors to participate, when they wanted to increase the amount of people that were ready to put their name on the registry, they changed what they were doing. Everybody will remember the young Hélène Campbell, who, by tweeting about organ donation, was able to exponentially increase the number of people who had added their name to the registry. I am really proud to say that in my riding, over 50% of the people in Nickel Belt have their name on the registry. I'm really proud of this.

So why am I bringing this up when we're talking about blood supply? When was the last time you heard Canadian Blood Services telling us that we needed more people to come and donate plasma? I bet you none of you have heard.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We do.

Hon. Liz Sandals: We do.

M^{me} France Gélinas: If we do need to have—

Hon. Liz Sandals: I hear that all the time in Guelph.

M^{me} France Gélinas: If you need to make sure that we have enough plasma so that we don't import from other countries, there is a lot that can be done yet. Some of the members have said that they've heard a radio commercial inviting people to donate blood. That is true. I've heard that too. But have we ever heard of an alarm saying, "We are in dire shortage of plasma? Please, Ontarians, roll up your sleeves now because we don't have enough"?

If those play on—they haven't played on the radio station that I listen to, and they haven't come on my Twitter account or my Facebook or anything of the above.

1720

The idea that I'm putting forward is that if we really needed more, I think we would be able to bring more voluntary donors right here in Ontario. If we were to be in a situation such that we were about to be short of plasma, then let the good people of Ontario know. I guarantee you, they will roll up their sleeves.

I don't usually take myself as an example, but I will in this case. I was a plasma donor for many, many years. Every week on Wednesday, I would go to what was called the Red Cross, at the time, in Sudbury. You're allowed to give plasma every week. Basically, the same people would be there. I worked downtown at the time, so I would just walk over. The Red Cross was located downtown. After a while, you get to know everybody who donates plasma.

By the way, it's something that takes close to an hour. The needle is one mega needle, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Don't discourage people.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I don't want to scare people away, but because they need to give you back your red blood cells, the needle is quite big in order for this to go through. For a lot of people, including myself—I don't really care. I have a few marks on my arms. I've never been an IV drug user or anything like this, but I could pass for one if you only looked at my arms, because there are a few needle marks there.

The point I'm making is that there are people who are willing to roll up their sleeves. I know them, because I sat with dozens and dozens of them many, many times, through the local Red Cross. Then they closed the plasma program in Sudbury. It got moved to Thunder Bay, and none of us ever donated plasma again.

If I had the opportunity to do this in my community, I would be more than happy to do it again, and I know a lot of people who would be just as willing as they were when the program was existing in Sudbury. It is feasible to have enough plasma through voluntary donations. I know people; we all know people. It is feasible.

The third key principle of the Canadian blood supply by Justice Krever was, "Sufficient blood should be collected so that importation from other countries is unnecessary." If that's really needed, I think it is feasible. I am sure that it is feasible.

The fourth principle is, "Access to blood and blood products should be free and universal." I think this is something that we have been able to continue to do in this country and in this province, and I hope we continue.

Then, "Safety of the blood supply system is paramount."

Those are pretty basic principles that Justice Krever put forward. At the time, every government stood behind those five principles and committed to those victims that it would never happen again, that we had learned from what had happened with the tainted blood scandal and that we would protect the people of our provinces, our territories and our country.

As I said, Quebec went ahead and made changes. They passed a law that made it clear that paid-for donations would never be allowed in their province. But Ontario did nothing of the sort. After we've been warned since 2012 that this for-profit company was going to come and set up shop in our province, we're acting now.

Everybody knows what "now" means. "Now" means that we already have a clinic that is fully open. "Now" means that on 82 Adelaide St. in Toronto right now,

Canadian Plasma—I always forget their name—has already set up shop. They have signed the lease in the location. They are located in a part of Toronto where there are quite a few shelters and halfway houses and parks, and I'm questioning, why this location? But that's the location that they chose.

We are told that they spent \$6 million in leasehold improvements to make their rental place a nice place to do this kind of work. They have invested in the furnishing of everything that is there to make sure that they can do this. They have a website that is equal to none—I wish the government website was as friendly as theirs is.

I certainly don't want to be perceived that I am supporting what they have done. No, I am opposed to what they are doing. But the fact remains that this for-profit company has warned the government since 2012 that they were going to do this. They have kept myself, and I'm sure the critic for the PCs, as well as the minister, informed, blow by blow, step by step, as to what was going on. They went out and advertised for the recruitment of their staff for everybody to see. They recruited 30 people who now have found jobs with this company and who are now being trained to be the workers who will be collecting the blood. They have put out exactly how payments will be made to people who decide to be paid for their plasma donations.

At the end of the day, what I'm saying is that during all of that, I have tried to be in contact with the minister. I have tried to be in contact with the ministry. I have put a question on the order paper regarding this. Let me find it. I did get an answer to the question on the order paper because, you know, Mr. Speaker, when we put a question on the order paper, they have to answer us. As soon as I find it, I will let you know what it said—well, I can't find it right now, but I did that back in May 2013. The minister answered back.

I wrote to her and so did many other people. I asked questions in the House. At every step of the way, I sort of got always the same thing, the "feel good," as to, they are opposed to it in the biggest way possible, that they value the voluntary donation system—and all of this I have no problem believing. I believe it and I support it, but it was very short on the action side, as to: What are we going to do to actively prevent this from happening? What are we going to do to make sure that Ontario is bulletproof when it comes to making sure that our donation system becomes voluntary? None of that was forthcoming.

It didn't matter if I asked a question in the House, if I tabled a question on the order paper, if myself, the Canadian Hemophilia Society and many others wrote to the minister, the answers were always the same, that they were fundamentally opposed to paid-for plasma donation, that they supported and that they agreed with the recommendations of the Krever commission and all of this, but nothing was forthcoming till after they were actually open—a disappointment. I feel like I, and all of us, have been let down.

But it doesn't matter what it does to me, Mr. Speaker. It matters what it does to our health care system, because

at the core of our health care system, what I call one of the pillars of our health care system, is trust. Once there is no trust, there is no health care that can happen.

1730

I'm old. I was there when the first tainted-blood scandal happened. Back then, if you would have told us that the virus from a monkey was about to be transferred to a human being and called HIV and infect 30,000 people, you would have been the laughingstock of anywhere you said that. But it did happen, and 30,000 people did get infected.

I would tell you, Speaker, that it doesn't matter how many tests we do on the blood and blood products that we collect right now, there is no way that we can guarantee that we know of every pathogen that will ever be blood carried—blood-borne pathogens, they're called. There are always new things that happen that we don't know about.

So what do you do? Well, you use the safety principle, and you put in place the recommendations the Krever commission had given us. When you put that into place, you make your blood system as safe as you can, and that includes not paying donors, being the number two principle that the Krever commission has given us.

So what does it mean when you go at one of the fundamental pillars of our health care system? That means that for people who provide care—you're not talking about their plan of care anymore; you're trying to defend the system.

Do you know how hard it was, Mr. Speaker, to get somebody to sign a consent for a blood transfusion when all of this was going on? Next to impossible, although the plan of care was very clear that in order to recuperate, in order to heal, in order to live, you needed a blood transfusion.

While the Krever inquiry was going on, let me tell you that health care providers spent a tonne of time trying to defend the system, because people were scared. People rejected this. People did not want to be the next victim who was going to get infected by tainted blood, by blood that carried diseases rather than life, for good reason. It had happened to 30,000 of them. Chances are, they knew a neighbour, a friend or even a family member who had been infected by a blood transfusion, and they didn't want that to happen to them. They didn't want that to happen to their spouses or to their children.

So what does that mean for the health care system? That means that it doesn't matter if your plan of care is very robust and this is the type of surgery that goes very well and the chances of full recovery are really good; if it includes that you need a blood product, if it includes that you need a blood transfusion or plasma, it becomes really tough. It becomes really tough. Something that should have been done in five minutes becomes a week-long argument with your client, patient or recipient, because they don't want anything to do with it.

So what is the risk of having a paid-for plasma clinic? The risk is that you undermine the trust in the health care system. The risk is that what should be a best practice,

step one, two, three in the treatment, all of a sudden becomes a big argument with your client, with your patient, who doesn't want anything to do with it.

Is it based in reality? Is it based in fact or fiction? It makes no difference. Their perception is their reality, and this is what they make their decision based on. It doesn't matter that you explain to them, "Oh, no, no. The plasma that was collected through the paid system has gone to the States for their forensics." It makes no difference to them. What makes a difference to them is that they now have a doubt. They now have an issue of trust. They now do not trust the system. Then patient care is compromised, not because the actual plasma or blood products that you were going to give them are compromised, not based on fact, but based on their perception. Their perception is their reality, and this is what they use to make decisions, and their decision is that they would rather be safe than sorry. Their decision is, "That part of my treatment, dear doctor—I don't want anything to do with it."

It's the same thing with the nurse who goes; the same thing with the social workers who will go; and the same thing with the entire interdisciplinary team that will go into that patient's room and try to explain to them, "You are really putting yourself at risk by refusing." But it doesn't matter, because the damage is done; because the trust has been eroded; because one of the pillars of our health care system has been cut down.

This is what this does: It introduces what I call the human element. The human element is that we are all human. We all make our decisions based on what is real to us, and we are fully in our rights to do this. We are the ones who know ourselves the best. We are the ones who should make decisions for our own care. We are the ones who have to give final consent. If you don't give consent, it's not going to happen. So you see, Speaker, how something as crucial as the trust in our health care system was on the chopping line.

Since 2012, we knew that Canadian Plasma Resources had intentions of eroding the trust in our health care system. We have 22,000 people working for the Ministry of Health, and what we got is a bill that comes after the doors to this private company are already open; a bill that comes after the \$6 million has already been spent; a bill that comes after a website, and after the recruitment of staff and recruitment of donors—because at the end of the day, this is what this is all about—have already been done.

Why? Isn't the most fundamental responsibility of our Minister of Health to protect our health care system? Since November 2012, our health care system has been under threat. What has our Minister of Health done? From where I'm sitting, it looks like nothing. It looks like the Minister of Health waited and waited and waited, and was outdone by this little company.

Really? Some 22,000 civil servants, who know more about health care than all of us will ever know, couldn't see any further than that? Or if they did—and I tend to think that they do, because they know our health care system pretty well—they could not motivate the Minister

of Health to act quicker, to bring a statement in the House that simply said, “We will not pay for blood product donation—stop; full end; nothing else?”

Instead, I have in front of me Bill 178. Bill 178 is so “reactioner”—I’m not sure if that’s a word.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Reactionary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Reactionary. Thank you. Bill 178 is so reactionary.

Right now, you have this for-profit company, Canadian Plasma Resources, that tells us, “Oh, no, we are allowed to open, and we’re allowed to operate, because we don’t fall under the bill, under the laws that exist.” So the minister goes and changes the laws that exist, after they’re already open, and then wants to rush this through the House. Really? This is the best we can do?

Not only does she do this, but the bill itself seems to have a few loopholes in it that I’m not comfortable with at all. Not only did we wait until after, I would say, the horse is out of the barn—we already have a for-profit plasma collection site in Toronto—but we come out with this bill that has pieces in it that leave me puzzled.

1740

They say things like, “The purpose of this act is to provide for recognition of the following principles....” We all know that there are five principles—we’ve all followed Krever—but she only names three. The other two, I guess—I don’t know—they’ll come up later in another bill. Who knows?

The first one: “Within Ontario’s health care system, blood donations are viewed as a public resource.” I can’t argue with that.

Second, “Blood donors should not be paid, except in exceptional circumstances.” This is where I always get a little bit uncomfortable, Mr. Speaker, because when we see “except in exceptional circumstances,” and those are not defined clearly, and you have people who have already spent \$6 million doing leasehold improvements to open a site—I’m thinking those people probably have deep pockets—I’m just going out on a limb here—and they can hire a whole bunch of lawyers for whom “except in exceptional circumstances” will be defined in ways that you and I wouldn’t have thought of.

“Exceptional circumstances” kind of means something—it leads me to believe, anyway, that it would not happen very often. But you put those words into the hands of high-paid lawyers, and all of a sudden they open up a breach into this act that a herd of elephants could drive through.

I have the pleasure to sit with Jagmeet Singh. Sorry, I’m supposed to call him by his riding.

Mr. Bill Walker: Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Bramalea–Gore–Malton. The MPP for Bramalea–Gore–Malton. He is a lawyer, and it is amazing, sometimes, when he goes on to define something. How do you dream this up? Well, that’s because the meaning of the word within the law, versus what you and I think it means, is sometimes a world apart. So I’m always a little bit wary.

Then there is this other exemption in the bill that makes me maybe not more uncomfortable but equally

uncomfortable, Speaker, if that makes any sense to you. It’s that there will be an exemption for Canadian Blood Services. In theory, that looks pretty good, except that I’d like to put Canadian Blood Services on record.

Oh, by the way, I found my order question, my paper. That was written question number 172, submitted on May 1, 2013, to which the minister was nice enough to respond to me.

As I said, in her response, she says all the right things, like that they’re really opposed to this. But she also confirmed something that I already knew about Canadian Blood Services, and I will quote the answer from the minister: “Canadian Blood Services has indicated that it is not affiliated with any organizations that pay Canadian donors for plasma donations, nor do they have plans to purchase any of their raw plasma.

“However”—and this is where it gets interesting—“Canadian Blood Services has indicated that as part of operating a safe blood system, they need to ensure security of supply. Canadian Blood Services states that the prohibition on paying donors for plasma would deny patients access to plasma products, both in Canada and around the globe.”

I’m not a lawyer, but when I read this it makes me uncomfortable that Canadian Blood Services states that a prohibition on paying donors for plasma would deny patients access to plasma products, both here in Canada and around the globe. It feels to me that this means that Canadian Blood Services is sort of open to that idea, yet our bill makes an exception for them.

So here we are passing an act to ensure that blood and blood constituents are donated freely, but we use things like “blood donors should not be paid except in exceptional circumstances,” which, as I said, if you ask the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton to drive a truck through this, he can talk your ears off for at least a day as to what “exceptional circumstances” may mean. I should be more kind to my fellow NDP member. He can be very eloquent as to explaining to you what “exceptional circumstances” may mean.

Second, it exempts from the bill the Canadian Blood Services, which is on record as saying that it sees the prohibition as denying patient access to plasma products. This is worrisome to me. Why, after waiting all this time, do we have a bill in front of us that is still wishy-washy—more than wishy-washy—that still has places where you open the door to things that are not as clear as to what the intent of the bill is.

I have other little issues with the bill. I haven’t had my briefing on it yet, so maybe once I’m briefed on it I will understand it better. I try to read all of the bills that come to my portfolio. I’m getting a little bit better at it, but those things are still really hard to read, Mr. Speaker. They use language in there that, my God, it doesn’t matter if I read the French one or the English one, they are still hard to understand. From what I understand, before I have access to a briefing, there seems to be a portion of the bill that gives the minister access to personal health information. I want to know why we put

those powers in that bill. There may be a very good reason why they are there, but by just reading the bill, I don't know, so I'm a bit worried.

The other thing that worries me is that it is unclear whether the changes that are being proposed to the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act will have any broader implication other than what we're trying to do: to prevent a paid-plasma clinic from opening. This is what happens when a bill is in reaction to something that has already happened: You're only focused on that.

Do I want to hold this up? Absolutely not. I wanted it done in 2012, and the NDP is not going to hold this up now. At the same time, I see a bill that comes in front of us that opens doors to things that make me extremely uncomfortable. I don't understand why not—the time frame for this—I mean, the bill was introduced on Thursday. We got the actual copy to read it—I never actually got it until Monday when I came back. I tried to read it and understand; I haven't had time to be briefed. Maybe if I had had a briefing by the Ministry of Health and the lawyers and all of this, all of my fears would have been put aside and people could have explained to me, “Oh, no, no, no. You read this wrong. Here's how you're supposed to read this,” but none of this has happened, and here I am doing my lead on an issue that is very near and dear to me and to a lot of people who want the people of Ontario to continue to trust that our health care system will be there in their time of need, to trust that we have an excellent health care system that will help you get healthy again and that won't give you diseases that will make you sick or even kill you, like we have seen before.

1750

A few people have talked about how our voluntary system works well. I can tell you that there are three volunteers in the member from London West's riding who have made over a thousand donations. People are generous, and people are rolling up their sleeves for the right reasons.

There are a lot of Ontarians out there who would be willing to give plasma, if it was something that was available in their community—but right now it is not. I can speak for my community of Sudbury, where we used to have plasma collection and we don't anymore.

Is it time to make changes? Is it time to make sure that the full principles that the Krever inquiry has given us are actually put into place? I would say so. That would mean that Ontario would become self-sufficient.

I am convinced that the good people of Ontario have it in them. If we let them know that we need them, they will come to the rescue, and they will roll up their sleeves, even if they're very big needles, and they will make plasma donations.

The call and urgency for this has not been broadly known. Nobody knew that we were not self-sufficient. The minister and the critic for the PCs had made it clear that when it comes to actual plasma, we are self-sufficient. It's really on the manufactured side of plasma, whether it be medications, drugs or other things that we

rely on—basically, the States have the manufacturing side of those products. So make that clear.

Let's give us a goal that 100% of the plasma that is used by Ontarians—whether it be through a manufactured product or through direct plasma itself—comes from Ontarians. I think this is a challenge that Ontarians would rise to if we make it known and if we make it feasible and accessible for people to donate. Why is it that those companies are willing to invest millions of dollars to do this? There are people in Ontario who are willing to give. Let's give them the opportunity to give to the not-for-profit voluntary sector rather than the for-profit paid-donation sector. Let's close those new private ventures in our province, the quicker the better. Let's follow the lead of Quebec, who shut the door tight.

Is Bill 178 the way to shut the door tight? I hope so, Mr. Speaker, but I still have doubts. I have doubts that we are reacting to what this particular company, Canadian Plasma Resources, has put forward as the reason why they're allowed to operate—and that as soon as we close this loophole, they will have found another loophole as to why they are allowed to continue to operate. I don't want this to happen.

Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de parler cet après-midi au sujet du projet de loi 178. Le projet de loi 178 s'appelle la Loi visant à assurer la gratuité du don de sang et de composants sanguins. Le projet de loi vise à s'assurer que le nouveau site d'une compagnie qui s'appelle Canadian Plasma Resources, qui a ouvert ici à Toronto sur la rue Adelaide, soit fermé au plus vite.

Le site qui vient d'ouvrir est une compagnie privée qui paie les donateurs. Donc, tous ceux qui se rendent là pour faire un don de plasma auront droit soit à une carte-cadeau ou un don fait à leur nom d'une valeur de 25 \$. Si on regarde ça, le plasma, les donateurs peuvent en faire un don à toutes les semaines. Donc, si tu regardes ça, pour quelqu'un qui y va régulièrement, ça veut dire près de 100 \$ par semaine, soit de cartes-cadeaux ou de dons faits en notre nom.

Le problème avec ce genre de choses-là, c'est que ça mine la confiance dans notre système de santé. On a vécu au travers du sang contaminé lorsqu'on a eu l'épidémie de VIH et de SIDA, ainsi que d'hépatite C, et on a vu l'effet que ça a eu sur notre système de santé. L'effet que ça a eu, c'est que les gens avaient perdu confiance dans notre système de collection de sang et refusaient cette partie-là du traitement. Donc, plutôt que d'avoir un plan de soins qui dit : « chirurgie, suivi de transfusion sanguine, etc. », les gens disaient « oui » à la chirurgie, « oui » aux soins et aux médicaments, mais « non » à la transfusion sanguine. Pourquoi? Bien, parce qu'ils avaient vu de leurs parents, de leurs amis et de leur famille recevoir du sang contaminé et eux-mêmes sont tombés sérieusement malades ou les gens qu'ils connaissaient ont été infectés du SIDA, du VIH ou de l'hépatite. Plusieurs de ces 30 000 personnes-là sont mortes. D'autres vivent encore avec des maladies chroniques sérieuses à cause qu'ils ont reçu du sang contaminé.

Donc, l'idée c'est vraiment de garantir la sécurité du système pour que lorsqu'on dit aux gens : « Bien, dans

ton plan de traitement, on doit te faire une transfusion, » qu'il n'y ait aucun doute dans leur esprit que le système sanguin est sécuritaire en Ontario, que tout a été fait pour le garder en sécurité et qu'il n'y ait pas ce doute-là, parce qu'une fois que tu introduis la notion du doute dans la qualité des soins, cela a des répercussions à n'en plus finir.

Ça fait depuis 2012 que Canadian Plasma Resources a dit au ministère de la Santé qu'ils avaient l'intention d'ouvrir une clinique privée, à profit, qui paierait pour les dons. Malheureusement, la ministre de la Santé a attendu après que la clinique soit ouverte avant de décider de nous présenter un projet de loi. Le projet de loi lui-même est réactionnaire. Il réagit aux raisons que la compagnie nous a données pour avoir le droit de travailler en Ontario. Ils disent qu'ils ont le droit de faire ça parce qu'ils ne sont pas couverts par la loi. La ministre de la Santé met des changements dans la loi pour s'assurer qu'ils n'aient pas le droit, mais j'ai des doutes.

Je me doute que ça, c'est la raison qu'ils nous ont donnée en ce moment, mais qu'est-ce qui peut nous convaincre qu'il n'y aura pas une autre raison la prochaine fois? Et là, on va se retrouver avec un autre projet de loi qu'on doit passer à toute vitesse.

Un projet de loi, ça ne se passe pas à toute vitesse, surtout un projet de loi qui a quand même des choses dedans qui sont un peu problématiques. Quand on dit des choses comme « Les donneurs de sang ne devraient pas

recevoir de paiement, sauf circonstances exceptionnelles », bien, c'est quoi les circonstances exceptionnelles? Pour moi et vous, monsieur le Président, ça veut probablement dire très peu de choses, mais pour un avocat bien payé, des « circonstances exceptionnelles » ça peut vouloir dire beaucoup, beaucoup de choses, beaucoup plus que ce qu'on pense. Donc, le projet de loi lui-même, j'ai des questions.

Je dois avouer par contre que je n'ai pas eu encore de brefage sur le projet de loi. Parfois, après le brefage, je suis capable de mieux comprendre les projets de loi. Ce n'est quand même pas facile à lire ces affaires-là, que ce soit en français ou en anglais. Peut-être qu'une fois qu'on me les aura expliquées, mes craintes vont s'atténuer, mais en ce moment, il y a des choses qui m'inquiètent dans le projet de loi et j'aimerais avoir le temps de le regarder en détail.

Vous voulez vous lever? You're looking to stand up, it looks like. Ça veut dire que je m'assoie? That means I sit down? OK. Je peux faire ça.

Le Président suppléant (M. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough–Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉ PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
Catherine Fife, John Fraser
Monte Kwinter, Jane McKenna
Rick Nicholls, Peter Tabuns
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
des services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle**

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Continued from back cover

Maple syrup production

Mr. Michael Mantha 6032

GO Transit

Mr. Steven Del Duca 6032

Disaster relief

Ms. Laurie Scott 6032

Greenbelt

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn 6033

Ontario farmers

Mr. John O'Toole 6033

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014, Bill 179, Mr. Milloy / Loi de 2014 sur la responsabilisation et la transparence du secteur public et des députés, projet de loi 179, M. Milloy

First reading agreed to 6033

MOTIONS

Select Committee on Developmental Services

Hon. John Milloy 6033

Motion agreed to 6034

Committee membership

Hon. John Milloy 6034

Motion agreed to 6034

Private members' public business

Hon. John Milloy 6034

Motion agreed to 6034

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Government accountability

Hon. John Milloy 6034

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday 6035

Mr. Rosario Marchese 6036

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Agricultural colleges

Mr. Rob E. Milligan 6037

Government services

Mr. Michael Mantha 6037

Use of digital technologies

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri 6037

Physiotherapy services

Mr. John O'Toole 6037

Gasoline prices

Mme France Gélinas 6038

Cystic fibrosis

Mr. Jim Wilson 6038

Office of the Ombudsman

Miss Monique Taylor 6038

Lyme disease

Mr. Toby Barrett 6038

Off-road vehicles

Mr. John Vanthof 6039

Ontario College of Trades

Mr. Bill Walker 6039

Diagnostic services

Mme France Gélinas 6039

Agricultural colleges

Mr. Jim McDonell 6039

Firefighters

Mme France Gélinas 6040

Senior citizens' housing

Mr. Frank Klees 6040

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

Job creation

Mr. Jim Wilson 6040

Hon. Yasir Naqvi 6041

Mr. Steve Clark 6043

Mr. Michael Prue 6044

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn 6048

Ms. Lisa MacLeod 6050

Mr. John Vanthof 6052

Mr. Bob Delaney 6053

Mr. John Yakabuski 6054

Mr. Steven Del Duca 6055

Motion negated 6057

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014, Bill 178, Ms. Matthews / Loi de 2014 sur le don de sang volontaire, projet de loi 178, Mme Matthews

Hon. Deborah Matthews 6057

Mrs. Gila Martow 6059

Mr. Jagmeet Singh 6059

Hon. Liz Sandals 6059

Mr. Bill Walker 6059

Hon. Deborah Matthews 6060

Mrs. Christine Elliott	6060
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	6065
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	6065
Mr. Bill Walker.....	6065
Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	6065
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	6066
Mme France G��linas.....	6066
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	6072

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 24 March 2014 / Lundi 24 mars 2014

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	6019
Mr. Rick Bartolucci.....	6019
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	6019
Mr. Mike Colle.....	6019
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	6019
Mr. Paul Miller.....	6019
Hon. Michael Gravelle	6019
Mr. Rob Leone	6019
Mr. John Vanthof	6019
Hon. Ted McMeekin	6019
Mrs. Gila Martow.....	6019
Hon. Liz Sandals	6019
Ms. Laurie Scott.....	6019
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	6019
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6019
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	6019

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Ontario budget

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	6020
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6020
Hon. Charles Sousa.....	6020

Pan Am Games

Mr. Rod Jackson	6021
Hon. Michael Chan	6021

Government's record

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	6022
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6022
Hon. Eric Hoskins	6022

Health care

Mme France Gélinas	6022
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6023

Green power generation

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	6023
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6023

Energy policies

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	6024
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6024

Blood donation

Ms. Soo Wong.....	6024
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6025

Ontario public service

Mr. Monte McNaughton	6025
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6025
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	6026

Pan Am Games

Mr. Paul Miller.....	6026
Hon. Michael Chan	6026

Distracted driving

Mr. Bas Balkissoon	6026
Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	6026

Highway construction

Mr. John Yakabuski	6027
Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	6027

Arts and cultural funding

Mr. Michael Prue	6028
Hon. Michael Chan	6028

Mining industry

Mr. Phil McNeely.....	6028
Hon. Michael Gravelle	6028

Ontario College of Trades

Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	6029
Hon. Brad Duguid	6029

Services for the developmentally disabled

Miss Monique Taylor	6030
Hon. Ted McMeekin	6030

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	6030
Mr. Bob Delaney.....	6030

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Doctor shortage

Mr. Randy Pettapiece	6030
----------------------------	------

Events in Tecumseh

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	6031
-------------------------	------

Greek Independence Day

Ms. Soo Wong.....	6031
-------------------	------

Kemptville agricultural college

Mr. Rob E. Milligan	6031
---------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

